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Article:	**Moral Guidance, Spiritual Progression and Digitization: Analyzing Religious Uses of Facebook`s Islamic Content**
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ABSTRACT

The advent of digital media with displayed religious information opened new venues of enquiry. In its quest for structured thinking, it led from ideological basis (beliefs) to ethical reasoning for practice. In the pursuit of justifiable arguments, the relation was treated differently in diverse societies. As in Pakistan, where Islamic ideology serves as the major dominative concern, the study investigates uses of Islamic content shared on the customarily used platform of digital media i.e. Facebook. The study aims at investigating utilization behaviors of Pakistani Muslim Facebook users regarding the religious content on social media. Drawing upon the theory of uses and gratification, the study assumes that exposure to Facebook`s religious content provides Information, religious guidance, religious motivation and spiritual progression to users and helps them to adopt Islamic ways of doing life.

Keywords: Social Media, Religious Information, Moral Guidance, Spiritual Progression

Introduction

The dialectical relationship between religion and technology has been the focus of attention among various researchers representing different schools (Usmani and Akmal, 2018; Verschoor-Kirss, 2012; Zviadadze, 2014; Miller, Mundey et al. ,2013) but in recent times, the dynamic duo has also gauged attention as two mutually exclusive but corresponding disciplines (Kgatle ,2018; Coman and Coman , 2017; Ibahrine , 2014). A set of beliefs about the beginning, nature, and intent of creation can be characterised as the religion, particularly when measured as the formation of a superhuman agency or agencies, usually including religious and formal observations, and frequently comprising a moral code leading the behavior of human dealings (Waheed, Saleem, Riaz, & Bukhari., 2020; Streng, 1985). On the other hand, media are considered as the reflection of the society due to its powerful impact on people's life. The rapid growth in this field has led to the evolution of social media as an important and useful tool of information. Social media is considered as a great source of information and awareness in every occupation and the use of social media is increasing day by day as a tool to get easy and rapid information from any genre as political, social, religious, business and health (Beak, 2011; Park, 2009).

Social media has become the necesarry tool of information for everyone. Individuals use social media for several purposes to get information and to keep themselves vigorous part of the society. Especially youngsters are very important who use social sites on regular base (Miller, Mundey et al., 2013). Social networking sites Facebook and online operator reviews were amongst those regularly used websites for searching information are Facebook,Wikipedia,YouTube,Twitter sites were used in everyday life and for academic course-related information seeking contexts (Kim, 2011; Faimau and Behrens, 2016)

New media of communication has become one of the most regularly used communication and information method for people of all ages,genders, nationalities and religious beliefs (Bartoletti, 2013). The rapid adoption of social media in Pakistan is very important that how technology influenced on religious identities in pakistan as a large number of users on social media shared spiritual posts (Ibahrine, 2014).

The Internet has gradually become a general source of information in every field. More and more, individuals are turning to social media and Internet sites to share health information and experiences (Anamaria & Drugan, 2016). Facebook, Podcasts, Multiplayer virtual worlds, Blogs, and Twitter were being recognized as used by medical students (Calderaro, 2018). Social Media play a key role in circulating news through multimedia platforms, beyond national borders, across social, cultural and political niches.

Muslims around the world, agree that Islam is one of the true faith that leads to preservation. So this is the strong pactice that Muslims share as their religious activities and practice to inform others through social media. They consider social media as the biggest and credible platform to convey their religious information around the whole world (Bibi & Bukhari et al., 2018).

According to a Pew Research Center research, 65% of American Muslims identify religion as their top priority. 22% of people claim that religion plays a minor role in their lives. Compared to Shiites, Sunni Muslims give religion a 70% higher priority (Waheed, Saleem, Riaz, & Bukhari.,2020).

Social media is not just used by religious authorities; everyday Muslims have also begun tweeting passages from the Quran and Ahadith, or "prophetic sayings." When the level of religiosity increases throughout Ramadan, the spread of holiness consistently reaches its peak. The 140-character limit of a tweet, which was created specifically for ease of use and memorability, makes it the ideal instrument for memorization of the Quran and the Prophet's (PBUH) sayings. Ramadan traditions and habits now include tweeting Quranic verses and sayings from the Prophet (PBUH). To give their families a sense of virtual spirituality during the Haj, or pilgrimage to Mecca, many use their Twitter feeds to express the solemnity and presence of the holy location. To share the rituals and spiritual experiences, other pilgrims contribute pictures and videos from sacred locations. These behaviours help the Islamic community's use of social media and contribute towards increase in popularity (Ibahrine, 2014).

The rapidly growth of Facebook operators in Pakistan reveals that how social media is becoming the part of pakistanis and millions of users of facebook share their daily activities and opinion as well as use it for buisness and share their belifs. Global Digital prepared a report which explored that users in the age bracket of 25-34 stood at 11million which is the highest age group of facewbook users in Pakistan (Bibi & Bukhari et al., 2018).

According to another study, as of January 2014, 74% of internet American adults used social networking sites 26%. more .On social media platforms like these, users may create accounts, interact with others and share content like music, images, and videos Mufti (2015).

Objectives

The study aims to,

1. Investigate effect of religious content on Facebook on the religious ideology of Muslim users of Pakistan,

2. Evaluate the ways adopted by Muslim users of Pakistan for the utilization of religious content shared on Facebook

Research Question:

1. How the Exposure to Facebook religious content effects religious beliefs and practices of Muslim users in Pakistan?

Literature review

To have an extensive view of literature, three categories are formed. The first category is related to effects of social media; second category is related to connection of the social media with religion and the third one is based religious influence on Facebook's users.

According to Salem (2016), Social media is a significant instrument that social media users use to gratify their needs. By just clicking button users can share or watch anything like newest breaking news. Social Sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are midpoint for exchanging the opinions, views, thoughts, beliefs and ideas. According to another study, the occurrence of social media has changed the communication patterns throughout the world. The foundation of the social media notion is the idea that "Web tools" are a group of open-source, user-controlled, collaborative online programmes that help users contribute to commercial and social activities by enhancing their skills, knowledge, and purchasing power (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008).

After conducting a number of in-depth interviews, Salem (2016) discovered that people express their religious convictions online in order to have a feeling of community. Social media platforms with an academic or community vibe encourage individuals to freely discuss their spiritual ideas. The effective creation, distribution, sharing, and modification of informational content offered by online apps is being investigated to encourage the development of informal operators' networks that facilitate the exchange of ideas and information (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008). Ibahrine (2014) describes digital places have prominently influenced the social life of Muslims, religious activities, religious practices, and religious announcements. Similar to other areas, Muslim-majority nations have recently seen a rapid spread of social media platforms.

Brubaker and Haigh (2017) assert that faith based users also motivate individuals the use Facebook for accessing spiritual guidance and for entertainment. Under the study of Brubaker and Haigh, individuals have religious outlook use Facebook to get four motivations from Facebook religious information, spiritual progression, ministering and entertainment. Ibahrine (2014) further elaborates thatr eligious scholars have accounts to guide their followers

but the common Muslims share Quranic verses, Ahadith and other content related to religion which they knew.

By taking another stance, Beak (2011) explores easy access to technology the acceptance of social sites is increasing quickly that is why the point is noticeable what kind of information and knowledge users shared on social sites. The study explores that Facebook users have primary motivations to connecting with Facebook to share information with others that they think through is valuable for others. When they consider valuable information should convey to others that is not surprising, most of people use Facebook to promote their religious activities.

Faimau and Behrens (2016) discovered by the usage of certain philological tactics that form the construction individuality in addition to socio-religious vision. The study emphasizes by using certain philological tactics and sacred discourse in Facebook posts these posts create the narratives of religious authority religious individuality and religious community. Miller Mundey and Hill (2013) describe that religiousness influence social network sites and frequency of use for emerging adults between 18 and 23.

According to Kgatle (2018) the prophetic churches have fully embraced the use of social media and technology. This article also highlights the shortcomings of the Facebook. The core of the study is Facebook has played great role in the emergence of Prophetic Churches so that the prophetic churches should authenticate the users and the followers on Facebook Nealeigh (2017) a number of local churches use technology for religious purposes and motivations such local churches have designed a cell of social media who covers the target audience on social media. White, Tella & Ampofo (2016) explored that Facebook medium and it's potential for missionary purposes. They highlighted that most of the social platforms Facebook, Twitter, MySpace and Instagram most used platform by Ghanaians and also most feasible platform for spreading Gospel message.

Another report of Preston University in The New York Times (2014) quotes:
"Facebook and other social media platforms have completely changed how people interact, work, meet, and fall in love. Although it is too soon to conclude that social media have changed the way people practice religion, company officials claim that the number of individuals discussing religion on Facebook has significantly increased in the past few years. According to Facebook, 24% of users outside of the United States and 31% of Facebook users in the United States respectively identify their religion in their profile. There are more than 43 million Facebook users who follow at least one religious page". The report also highlights that people likes comments and shares the religious posts on daily basis. Campbell (2011) explores that

internet has ability to challenge traditional politics and also traditional religious authorities because on internet users have the opportunity and access to a global audience to reconstruct their ideas that is the reason internet provide many ways of religious information and many forms of religious activities with their global audience.

Helland(2012) explored after reviewing previous literature regarding religion and social network that social networks affected the online religious activities and practices. Social sites play a vital role in religious life of online users.

Uses and Gratification and the Present Study

The present study investigates the influence of the Facebook on Pakistani Muslims consumers. The dependent variables are gratified by the Facebook, using the socialization and informational properties of the uses and gratification theory. Facebook provides a structured mechanism to obtained religious information and socialization. The theory is relevant to the current research in various aspects that are following:

- A selection of audience for this study is active and energetic consumers of media and they are not passive, the study covers the public which excessively use internet and social media on daily basis.

- Social media sites alike Facebook, under the supervision of study by calculating the influence on public because its public choice how they want to use these sites and how much they have option to use the other sites, they have knowledge why they are using these social media sites and why they are choosing these sites.

- The reason of picking social media is because that it has a wide list of options from which people can selected any content and can complete their tasks.

- The users who have religious interest they use these social sites according to their interest, users get information regarding religion and religious scholars at any time on these platforms. Activists can interact with each other through these tools of communication

Methodology

Research Design

The method used for this study is the survey. A questionnaire is designed as the research tool developed on five point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagreed" to "strongly agreed"

Population

All the students enrolled at Bachelors and Masters Level at the public sector educational institutes of Lahore city and within the age bracket of (18-35) form the population for this study to measure the effects of religious content on the attitude of Pakistani consumers.

Sampling

Through purposive sampling technique and 150 respondents from 3 educational institutes of Punjab University i.e. ISCS (Institute of social and Cultural Sciences), IAS (Institute of Administrative Sciences), SCS (School of Communication Studies) were selected considering their exposure to the religious content on social media.

Hypotheses Testing

Confidence level of =95.0

Level of significance = 0.05

Test and CI for One Proportion

Test of p = 0.5 vs. p > 0.5

Hypotheses	X	N	Sample p	95 % Lower Bound	Exact P-Value
H1 Exposure to Facebook pages provides religious information to Muslim users	370	600	0.613333	0.543331	0.000
H2 Users of Facebook get moral guidance from Facebook`s religious posts	389	600	0.640000	0.591051	0.000
H3 Exposure to Facebook`s religious posts is a source of religious motivation among users	372	600	0.616667	0.577351	0.000
H4 Exposure to Facebook`s religious posts provides spiritual progression to users	382	600	0.636667	0.597922	0.000

The proportion test revealed that 370 respondents agree that Facebook pages provide religious information to Muslim users, 389 agree that users of Facebook get moral from guidance from to Facebook`s posts, 372 respondents agree that exposure to Facebook`s posts is a source of religious motivation among users. Whereas, 382 respondents agree that exposure to Facebook`s religious posts provide spiritual progression to users. The P value for all hypotheses is 0.000 that identifies the result as highly significant.

Discussion

Upon investigating, the frequency of the users who take interest in knowing the perception of religious scholars through Facebook 7%were strongly disagreed, 10.33% were disagreed, and 12.66% were neutral, 59.33% were strongly agreed and 10.67% were agreed from this statement. The highest frequency is 59.33% indicates that users take interest to know the perception of the religious scholars about specific religious issue from Facebook. . It also affirms Brubaker and Haigh`s (2011) version that illustrated 47% of Protestant communicants actively use Facebook to minister their religious followers (Roach, 2011). It is further discussed by Nealeigh (2017) as a number of local churches use technology for religion such as local churches have designed a cell of social media who covers the target audience on social media and these social sites planners aware their audience time to time.   Nealeigh describes that the Family Church's website shows they have several social media pages, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube pages tallying hundreds of followers. By applying it to the Muslim world, Ibahrine (2014) explored many of the religious scholars run the pages on social sites to maintain their followership.

On asking whether Facebook provides the users moral guidance regarding religion 9% were strongly disagreed, 12.33% were disagreed, 16.33% were neutral, 58% were strongly agreed, and 10.33% were agreed to it. The highest frequency out of 100% is 58% that indicates majority get moral guidance from Facebook.   This is also mentioned in the study of Brubaker and Haigh (2017), the findings of the study suggest Christians use social media for religious and spiritual objectives and their needs engaging with religious content based on the usage of Facebook. The study also describes those use regularly Facebook for posting, liking commenting and sharing faith based content their mind are more religious than others. Frequent use also predicted in quest of religious information. .Faith based users also motivate individuals to use Facebook for accessing spiritual guidance and not only for entertainment. According to the study of Brubaker and Haigh (2017), individuals have religious outlook use Facebook to get four motivations from Facebook`s religious information, spiritual progression, ministering

and entertainment. The researcher found the frequency 42% were strongly agreed in response to get moral guidance from Facebook. It was found by Campbell (2011) that the Internet provides user's easy track for information the reason is they can seek answers to questions without traditional gatekeepers or interpreters of information, such as a preacher or youth group leader. Youngsters get religious information from social sites because the reason is they can easily get information about religion and they do not face any gatekeepers like traditional religious authorities that is why youngsters have a preference to social media to approach religious content.

In response to the question Facebook users get spiritual progression from Facebook, it was found that the responses regarding the frequency of getting spiritual progression from Facebook, 4% were strongly disagreed, 24% were disagreed, 7.66% were neutral, 62% were strongly agreed and 2.33% were agreed to this statement. The highest frequency was found as 62%. It has been explored by Salem (2016) too, that people use especially Muslims social media to satisfy their spiritual needs according to the Pew research center (Religion and Electroniuc Media, 2014) the frequency of adults who attend religious services via social media was more than those who said they do not attend religious services via social media..

Conclusion

The increased reliance on social sites especially Facebook is proving itself an important source of knowing religious theory and practice. The study concludes that social media is an easiest and fastest way to get information whatever that is related to religion as social media highlighted many religious information and issues those were not in the knowledge of public. Social media is an effective source of religious awareness among social media users and religious information is increased due to it. People are well aware of religious activities due to social media these days. Social media is creating awareness regarding religion; it has influence on minds of people to help in understanding the religion.

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