

Committee: Young Delegates Forum

Issue: Using social media platforms to incite social awareness

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INTRODUCTION

Dear delegates,

We are delighted to welcome you to this year's 7th ATS MUN! As you are all probably aware of, this year's conference will be held online due to COVID 19 restrictions. Although this may be unfortunate, it shall not refrain us from sharing an exciting and educational experience as a whole! This year, we have been given the wonderful opportunity of chairing in the committee of YDF, and we will do our best to ensure a safe and pleasant environment!

YDF'S second topic aims to highlight the importance of raising social awareness through the use of social media. Nowadays, social platforms play a crucial role in citizens' lives, not only regarding light matters, but also concerning much more serious social imbalances. To be more specific, social media hold great power in affecting society's awareness on important humanitarian matters. A recent example of this phenomena is how African American individuals have deliberately been victims of both physical and mental abuse, in their workplace, at school, or even in their own home. Thus, the creation of the Black Lives Matter movement arose, which mostly, if not entirely, gained the recognition it deserved through social media. This example is one of the many social movements, that has been recognized by the majority of member states, heavily due to social media platforms. Thus, as it can be relatively self-explanatory, social media, if used correctly, can definitely be a great tool when it comes to raising awareness and educating the public.

This particular study guide will provide you with all the information needed for you to understand this topic in more depth. However, it is highly advised you do your own research on this topic, since it will make it much easier for you to be able to connect your country's policy with the information you present throughout the conference!

In case any questions rise, please do not hesitate to contact us so we can resolve them in advance!

All the best,

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DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Social Media

Social media is a computer-based technology that facilitates the sharing of ideas, thoughts, and information through the building of virtual networks and communities. Social media is Internet-based and gives users quick electronic communication of content. Content includes personal information, documents, videos, and photos. Users engage with social media via a computer, tablet, or smartphone via web-based software or applications.¹

Social Media User

Social media users are the individuals, organizations, or teams, that directly engage with the features of social media platforms.

Social Media Features

Social media features are the actions that an application permits or supports, such as sharing photos, leaving comments or raising campaigns.

Social media campaign

A social media campaign is a series of coordinated activities aimed at achieving a specific goal over a set period of time, with outcomes that can be tracked and measured. It can be limited to a single network or take place across multiple social media platforms.²

Community Guidelines

¹ Dollarhide, M. (2021, September 13). *Social media definition*. Investopedia. <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/social-media.asp>.

² 7 of the best social media campaigns (and what you can learn from them). Social Media Marketing & Management Dashboard. (2020, November 3). <https://blog.hootsuite.com/social-media-campaign-strategy/>.

Community guidelines are a set of rules created by each social media platform to ensure a standard of behavior expected on the platform to create a safe environment for users to interact and have fun.³

Cyber Propaganda

Cyber propaganda can be broadly defined as the use of modern electronic means to manipulate an event or influence public perception toward a certain point of view. The propagandists use varied techniques including stealing private information and releasing it to the public, hacking machines directly, creating and spreading fake news, and so on. While cyber propaganda mostly targets politicians and persons of influence, it has also been used by hackers to target private organizations.⁴

Social awareness

Social awareness is the ability to comprehend and appropriately react to both broad problems of society and interpersonal struggles. This means that being socially aware relates to being aware of your environment, what's around you, as well as being able to accurately interpret the emotions of people with whom you interact.⁵

Social prejudice

Social prejudice is an unjustified or incorrect attitude, usually negative, towards an individual based solely on the individual's membership of a social group.⁶

Social bias

Social bias can be positive and negative and refers to being in favor or against individuals or groups based on their social identities (e.g., race, gender, etc.). Biases are often based on stereotypes and prejudices that are systemically maintained.⁷

Influencer

³ Tackling hate speech - <https://www.internetmatters.org/connecting-safely-online/advice-for-parents/tackling-the-hard-stuff-on-social-media-to-support-young-people/understanding-community-guidelines/>

⁴ Cyber propaganda. Cyber propaganda 101. <https://www.trendmicro.com/vinfo/es/security/news/cybercrime-and-digital-threats/cyber-propaganda-101>.

⁵ *Social Awareness: Definition, Example & Theories*. Study.com | Take Online Courses. Earn College Credit. Research Schools, Degrees & Careers. (n.d.). <https://study.com/academy/lesson/social-awareness-definition-example-theories.html>

⁶ Mcleod, S. (1970, January 1). Prejudice and discrimination in psychology: Simply psychology. Prejudice and Discrimination in Psychology | Simply Psychology. Retrieved September 18, 2021, from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/prejudice.html>.

⁷ *What is Social BIAS? - uf counseling and Wellness Center (cwc)*. counseling.ufl.edu. (2020, August 28). Retrieved September 18, 2021, from <https://counseling.ufl.edu/resources/bam/module1-4/>.

Influencer is a person or group that has the ability to influence the behavior or opinions of others or a person who is paid by a company to show and describe its products and services on social media, encouraging other people to buy them.⁸

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In today's society, social media has become one of the most important tools for information and entertainment. It has been able to provide numerous websites and apps that have opened communication doors, and the most noteworthy of all; it plays a major role in raising public awareness and gathering opinions, information, and attitudes about certain subjects.

In the rising world, social media is the most potent weapon for communication, increasing consciousness and presenting the true state of society.

Historical Background

The First Social Media Site

Six Degrees, the first well-known social media site and was founded in 1997. It allowed users to create a profile and connect with other individuals. The first blogging sites became popular in 1999, igniting a social media phenomenon that continues to this day. SixDegrees.com was a social networking website that ran from 1997 to 2001 and was based on the Web of Contacts social networking architecture. It was named after the six degrees of separation concept and allowed users to list both internal and external friends, family members, and acquaintances; external contacts were invited to join the site.

Today

Social media exploded in popularity after the development of blogging. In the early 2000s, sites like MySpace and LinkedIn grew in popularity, while Photobucket and Flickr allowed online photo sharing. In 2005, YouTube launched, ushering in a whole new way for people to communicate and share across vast distances. Facebook and Twitter were both available to people all around the world by 2006. These sites are still among the most popular social networking sites on the web. Tumblr, Spotify, Foursquare, and Pinterest were among the first sites to emerge to fill unique social networking niches. There are a plethora of social networking sites available today, and many of them may be linked to allow cross-posting. This

⁸*Influencer*. Cambridge Dictionary. (n.d.). Retrieved September 18, 2021, from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/influencer>.

offers an atmosphere in which users can communicate with the greatest number of individuals while maintaining the intimacy of one-on-one contact.

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Ways To Raise Awareness

The “Hashtag”

Social media is a powerful tool that people are able to take advantage of and make actual change in the world. Some of the biggest and most impactful social justice movements were inspired by a simple hashtag.



Great examples are: #BlackLivesMatter (to end police violence against black people),

#NeverAgain (to end gun violence), #MeToo (to empower survivors of sexual abuse), #FridaysForFuture (to pass legislation in support of climate justice and sustainable jobs), #DREAMers (to pass the DREAM Act, which grants at least temporary residency to immigrants who entered the United States as minors) and so many more. ⁹

All of them went from hashtags to movements. Through the use of social media people can gain firsthand knowledge of the challenges that plague communities and drive activity. From those who are directly impacted, social media delivers a firsthand perspective of the world's most pressing concerns.

As a result, the most effective use of social media is to raise awareness about a problem. The list of campaigns gets longer each day as more people use social media to raise awareness and promote solidarity around a movement.

Online Events

⁹ *Hashtags that changed the world*. Public Allies. (2021, May 26). <https://publicallies.org/hashtags-that-changed-the-world/>.

Online events are a great means towards spreading awareness and helping others gain knowledge about social issues. With the help of certain platforms such as Zoom, Skype, Discord, Microsoft Teams etc., professionals, through lectures and interactive discussions, can educate the public and offer information regarding social problems which have not been given enough attention, as well as help raise money for various worthy causes. As a result, people will be able to be widely informed about the problems that are affecting humans all over the globe.

Petitions

A petition is a document signed by a large number of people demanding or asking for some action from the government or another authority.¹⁰

Petitions are a great way to show support, get the attention of the community and decision makers, and bring about change. They demonstrate group strength, and while officials may ignore them at first, the more names there are on the petition, the harder it will be to ignore it.¹¹

As Rosemary Clark-Parsons, Associate Director of the University of Pennsylvania's Center on Digital Culture and Society said: "Learning about an issue through an online petition or other digital campaign can lead folks to do further research and reading online, which can lead to higher levels of involvement and commitment,".¹²

However, in order for a petition to be considered successful and mainly effective, it must also be paired with many more actions, such as organizing demonstrations and rallies, writing letters to the authorities or even scheduling meetings with people that have an influence and can help create change.

¹⁰ *Petition*. Cambridge Dictionary. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/petition>.

¹¹ *The Power of Petitions*. Action activity 6: The power of petitions. (n.d.). http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/edumat/hreduseries/hereandnow/Part-4/10_action-activity6.htm.

¹² Maxouris, C. (2020, June 23). *Online petitions work best when you do more than just sign*. CNN. <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/06/23/us/do-online-petitions-work-trnd/index.html>.

Donation-Based Crowdfunding

Crowdfunding is a technique of obtaining funds that involves individual investors working together. This strategy harnesses the collective efforts of a large group of people—mostly via social media and crowdfunding platforms—and utilizes their networks for increased reach and exposure. While usually used for businesses, a crowdfunding website is also



a means towards raising money for a cause. It is very efficient, as it is a quick and easy website in which money can be gathered, where everything is presented on an individual accessible format, and thus time and effort is saved.

The Downsides

“Slacktivism”

Slacktivism has been defined as when people “support a cause by performing single measures” but are not necessarily engaged or devoted to making a change¹³. Many people believe that slacktivism can’t lead to actual, solid change, and that it oversimplifies complex worldwide problems instead of solving them. Sharing a link or signing a petition is a very easy task, and so is disengaging from the cause right after.

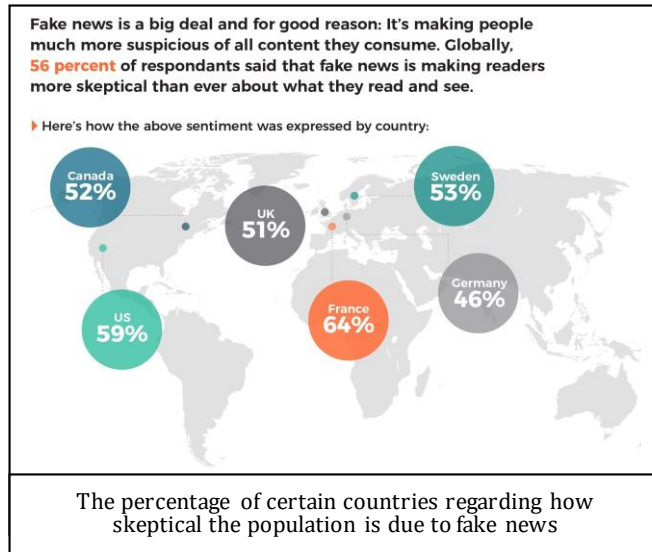
On the other side, according to a study conducted by researchers at Michigan State University, slacktivism can be an opportunity to raise more awareness and make engagement easy for the public. Even though, it usually only extends to other low-cost, low-risk options, such as signing an online petition without making a financial contribution, in some cases, it can even create so much awareness that it increases donations.

However, slacktivism should only be the beginning of the road to change because real effort is needed in order to make a real change in the world. When a movement has a purpose and a way to achieve it, slacktivism transforms into meaningful activism and brings about real change.

¹³ Written By Ilona Lodewijckx She/her. Digital Content Creator at CitizenLab. Copywriter. Em dash (—) enthusiast. (2020, July 1). ‘Slacktivism’: Legitimate action or just lazy liking? CitizenLab’s Blog. <https://www.citizenlab.co/blog/civic-engagement/slacktivism/>.

Misinformation

With the increase of social media users worldwide, the intentional spreading of false narratives by malicious actors concerning globally afflicting issues is more common than ever. Due to this phenomenon, a question arises: How do we battle fake news and distinguish them? First and foremost, experts working for several social media platforms



must be able to track and respond to misinformation by providing and sharing facts and evidence. Secondly, it is vital that more in depth and practical education to be implemented in order to fight misinformation, to amplify the skill of telling real from fake news, fact-checking and recognizing reliable sources on the internet, as many members of society are easily misled.

How to start a Social Media Campaign

1. Establish the goals of the campaign

Establishing objectives and goals is the first stage in developing a winning plan. Success cannot be determined until goals have been set. These goals must include the actions of social media

users when interacting with the campaign. Furthermore, the aim must be stated clearly while remaining interesting, likable, and shareable for a campaign to remain effective. The S.M.A.R.T. goal framework sets several goals that can make a campaign highly successful. S.M.A.R.T. stands for



Specific (simple, sensible, significant), Measurable (meaningful, motivating), Achievable (agreed, attainable), Relevant (reasonable, realistic and resourced, results-based), and Time-bound (time-based, time limited, time/cost limited, timely, time-sensitive).

2. Decide how to promote the campaign to all age groups

Promotion is the most crucial step towards organizing an effective campaign. Through promotion, the recognition of a campaign may be boosted, and active communities may be created. Furthermore, social listening can be used to gauge brand sentiment. However, it is crucial to understand who the target audience of the campaign is and what they want to see on social media. As a result, material that they'll enjoy, remark on, and share may be developed. A good example of an effective promotion of an event or campaign is through Social Media influencers. These people are very popular amongst users, and thus, provided they support a specific cause on their platform, they can persuade several others to do the same. Social media influencers have a large following, and because social media is what made them famous, they can use it to extend their activism by conveying their views to their followers. Also, because they're "everyday people", social media celebrities are seen as more relatable and connecting with their audience. When social media influencers advocate issues and increase awareness, they are perceived as more authentic, and their activism is interpreted as real interest in the topic at hand.

3. Create an engaging and successful social media presence

In order for the campaign to take effect, the influence of social media is always an advantage. Strong visuals such as photos, videos, gifs etc. receive more engagement, and offer the campaigner the ability to build a relationship with their audience.

Creating a social media presence takes, time, creativity and dedication to grow the campaign's online community. To do that, campaigners need to focus on providing honest information to their audience, without aiming to mislead them so that they gain their trust and consequently, their support.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

Social media are used by most of the countries in the world and consequently by most of the population. This is because these past years' technology has evolved rapidly and has managed to be a part of our everyday life the past years. However, because everyone has a voice in the social media world, there is no way to efficiently and accurately tell which countries use these platforms to incite social awareness and which not.

Nevertheless, there are reasons why some countries may make use of them more than others. According to recent projections, China is the biggest social media market worldwide with 999.95 million users, ahead of the second-ranked India with close to 639 million current social media users.

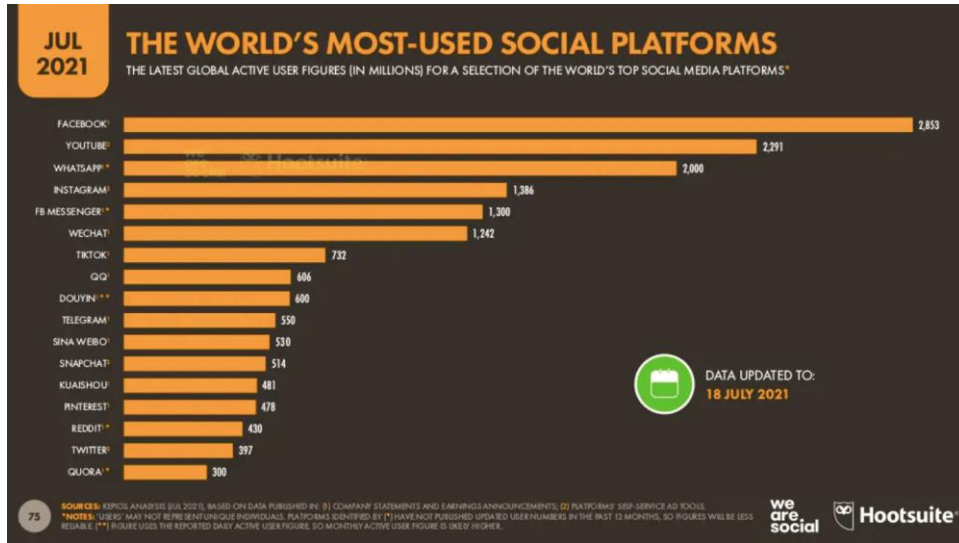
In February 2020, the country with the highest engagement rate for Instagram influencers was Finland, with 5.51 percent. The second-highest engagement rate was in Greece at five percent. In comparison, the country with the lowest engagement rate at that time was Kazakhstan, at 0.37 percent.

In more detail, one of the primary reasons these countries may use social networks more than others is most probably connected to their economics, as countries with the lowest social media penetration are primarily developing nations compared to countries with strong economies. Another factor could be that the population of that country is younger, as research shows that younger generations utilize social media more than older generations. Another explanation could be related to the country's culture, as some cultures are far more sociable than others, implying that they place higher importance on social media.

However, those countries are not the only ones who try and incite social awareness through social media platforms. Many businesses and organizations try as well and there are many ways in which they achieve that. One of them is fundraising. Since a typical social media fundraising campaign makes use of the audience's diversity while focuses attention on a single aim. This helps to raise small donations from a larger pool of donors while also increases awareness, which can lead to additional donations. Using a call to action can help raise more money. Social media can be used to raise charitable donations and the community's profile, as well as share experiences and connect with donors. Fundraising on social media is best done with a strategic plan that includes not only a goal but also a method for getting there, as well as a value for increasing awareness and organically expanding an audience.

Additionally, using social media to increase awareness of a non-profit's purpose, needs justice initiatives.

Social media can be used to offer a platform for sharing tales, narratives, and photographs, as well as information and data in an easily digestible format that engages audiences by assisting them in understanding.



TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of Event
11 December 1969	The Declaration on Social Progress and Development was proclaimed by General Assembly resolution 2542 (XXIV).
6 August 1991	The worldwide web is unleashed upon an unsuspecting public.
1997	The world's first social networking site "Six Degrees" was created.
3 March 2017	There was the joint declaration on freedom of expression and "fake news", disinformation and propaganda by the by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression, the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Representative on Freedom of the Media, the Organization of American States (OAS) Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information.
February 2004	Mark Zuckerberg, Eduardo Saverin, Dustin Moskovitz, and Chris Hughes, all Harvard University undergraduates, established Facebook in 2004. With over 2.5 billion users (2020), Facebook is the most popular social media platform on the planet.

2006	The #MeToo Movement began on social media (MySpace), by activist Tarana Burke. It is one of the most well-known and effective social media campaigns.
August 2007	The hashtag (#) debuts on Twitter.
October 2012	Facebook reaches 1 billion active users. The world wakes up to the fact that a for-profit corporation now owns one of its most important communication channels.
March 2018	It is revealed that Cambridge Analytica harvested troves of user data without their consent and used this data for political purposes. Facebook stock plummets. ¹⁴

UN INVOLVEMENT

UN's involvement with social media platforms is not only current but also direct. Since we live in a society which is digitally connected with most issues, the UN had to find a way to connect with citizens on a current level. As a consequence, the UN had created accounts on almost every social media platform, including Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and even TikTok. In that way, their social media team has the ability to raise awareness by uploading daily videos, pictures and speeches about flaming and relevant global issues.

The United Nations chief had called for worldwide restrictions that would control powerful social media companies, such as Facebook and Twitter, however, the Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said that no company should have the power to control the media. He pointed out there's no reason to give that much power to a reduced number of companies.

Social media creates dynamic new opportunities for United Nations communicators, enabling direct and real-time interactivity with UN audiences. The Department of Public Information welcomes and recognizes the benefits of these tools while acknowledging associated risks and challenges. Social media tools – web-based and mobile technologies, tools and platforms that provide the opportunity for people and organizations to publish their own material, make

¹⁴ *The history of social media: A timeline*. Phrasee. (2021, June 25). Retrieved September 18, 2021, from <https://phrasee.co/blog/the-history-of-social-media-a-timeline/>.

comments and/or engage with others, often blur the distinction between internal and external communication, and professional and personal communication quickly and easily.¹⁵

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

The “Hashtag” Movement

Nowadays, hashtags are not only used to highlight fun experiences, but are also deliberately used to shine light on important matters, such as racism, discrimination or social imbalances. One of the most relevant hashtags, is the #MeToo, which is used by citizens who have experienced sexual abuse within either their workplace or their everyday life, and it has special significance since it allows all survivors of sexual assault to unite and share their stories. Most importantly though, it raises awareness on the issue, helps prevent similar behaviors and encourages victims to speak up and confront their abusers.

Online campaigns

Another method which has deliberately been used in the past on raising awareness about global problems is hosting campaigns through social media. Fortunately, many people deeply care about spreading word when it comes social imbalances and injustice and are willing to take action to prevent them from happening again. Additionally, through online campaigns, people and organizations have managed to gain money to support their cause and make actual change.

Hosting speeches through social media

As we are all probably already aware of, social platforms are systematically used by many political figures. For instance, the current president and vice president of the United States, are both active users on Facebook, Twitter and even Instagram. Although their main duties are certainly offline, many of their speeches and events have not only been encouraged by their social media followers, but also repeatedly shared through all social media platforms, resulting on raising awareness internationally.

¹⁵ *Social media guidelines*. (n.d.). [https://www.unodc.org/documents/documents/hiv-aids/publications/Implementing Comprehensive HIV and HCV Programmes with People Who Inject Drugs_PRACTICAL GUIDANCE FOR COLLABORATIVE INTERVENTIONS.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/documents/hiv-aids/publications/Implementing%20Comprehensive%20HIV%20and%20HCV%20Programmes%20with%20People%20Who%20Inject%20Drugs_PRACTICAL_GUIDANCE_FOR_COLLABORATIVE_INTERVENTIONS.pdf)

Another example is Greta Thunberg's speech at the UN Climate Action Summit addressing the members of the parliament, which was broadcasted to the whole world by the help of the social media. Her speech successfully raised awareness and many young people were taken to the streets in a global strike about climate change.

UNESCO on social media

Let us also not forget about UNESCO's involvement on social media. UNESCO uploads photos and videos in order to raise awareness about climate change on the daily, highlighting its effects on our daily life and providing method and ways in which we could directly help our planet.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Social media can change the world. Through the years, it has brought attention to such issues and causes as #LoveWins, #BlackLivesMatter, #MeToo, #WeAreHere etc. in such a manner traditional media hasn't been able to accomplish in years.

Share Facts and Figures

Research and statistics are always very interesting to people but can also be very time-consuming due to the fact that it takes time to find the credible sources needed to deepen the research. However, through social media people share credible sources as well as statistics and helpful research on many current topics that affect both society and everyone as a person. Thus, it is easier for users to find what they are looking for and get educated on matters that affect them.

Promote Events

Social media platforms can be used as a tool to spread an event, charity, or movement. This is very helpful as many people all around the globe get informed about the event and thus can try to help in their own way. Also, social media are a very efficient way for a movement to spread around and raise awareness. An example could be the Black Lives Matter movement or the more recent MeToo movement, as both of them were promoted by social media and had a big impact on many people's lives. As seen with these, social media has the ability to raise public awareness about social justice concerns. Communities can organize in

the real world around a cause when they have the potential to reach a bigger audience by sharing information.

Share Photos and Videos

Not only can social media be used to organize large-scale protests, but it can also be utilized to document them. Almost every social movement in today's globe is covered on social media, and news organizations routinely scour sites like Twitter for new information or compelling visuals of current events.

Share Stories

Social media can serve as a very powerful mean for people and movements to tell their stories. Because of the global platform that they constitute, these stories can reach people from all around the world which helps spread awareness. We have the ability to view all that happens in society and to share it with the rest of the world thanks to the fantastic work of the media.

Signal Boosting

Despite the fact that social media allows an individual's voice to be amplified, this voice is often lost in the noise of the internet. To build traction for a post, a community must use the share tool, allowing it to reach a much larger audience. When two or more people on social media post a single message, this is known as signal boosting. Signal boosting, when done correctly, can make information go viral and efficiently help in raising social awareness.

Model of a Good Society

Because it always tries to side with the truth and relevant aspect, the media plays an important part in shaping a good society to develop our lifestyle and move it on the proper road. As they are a part of almost everyone's everyday life nowadays and everyone watches what is displayed.

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