The Chicken is the Egg

Do members make a group or is it the other way around?

An oval egg helps me reason.

If posts are representations of a person – their voice, so to speak – what does it say about group behaviour online when we ignore posts and instead focus on status updates?

If in a fit of frenzy, when I was feeling particularly stir-crazy, I deleted the more than 100 posts I had up on a Facebook group I am part of. A hundred-odd status updates, news links, poetry, polls, videos, and photo uploads that were specific to the interests and theme of the group – digital native culture. The hardest part was the fact that of the 70-plus members, not a one noticed that ‘transgression’. The most surprising fact is that I didn’t get all hyper-emotional for losing vital bits of what I had invested in the group for more than a year. So, what gives?

Well, it wasn’t all mayhem. I was particularly interested in finding out if firstly, would anyone notice the missing posts; secondly, would anyone ‘miss’ the deletions on an emotional note; thirdly, would it concern anyone enough that those posts that were liked, commented and gifted over were no longer available to the group as an archive; fourth, did anyone think that I unfairly deleted posts that was partly, group property, considering so many of them commented and expressed considered opinions on them; and lastly, what are the qualities that we attribute to posts – are they merely information bytes, or do people use them as reference to understand the person behind the posts?

The last point is crucial to delve into considering that group members on Facebook hardly meet each other, especially if the original way they came together was virtual and not an offline-meet-up-turned-cyber-hangout. So, the way we interact within a group is, apart from one-on-one or one-to-many group chats is primarily through the dozen postings. The posts become a guide to form impressions on group members: some one who simply Likes several hundred posts over the year but never responds through comments would be considered a lurker or a introvert, neutral or talk-shy person. At other times, posters can be classified as non-social, introvert, neutral or talk-shy person. At other times, posters can be classified as non-social, introvert, neutral or talk-shy person.

So, by definition, a group’s outline is pre-defined even before members join it. Once the members join, they define that outline further, sort of like darkening a pencil line on paper with a charcoal marker. What happens as the days go by? Does the group stick to the outlines of its ideals or do the members slowly change its shape and definition? Don’t we slowly erase the boundaries of definition and redefine the group for what we are, rather than for what ‘it’ (the group) stood for?

In this metamorphosis, members also change, exhibit new traits and behavior and continue molding the group in unforeseen ways. The group in effect can never be a static entity and cannot be effectively quantified or defined at any one point in time.

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UK's first ever online flash mob

The UK's first ever online flash mob saw hundreds of colored hoppers invade one of the biggest sites on the Internet. Flash mobs normally take place in the real world, when a large group of people suddenly converge in a public place and perform an unusual activity for a short while — normally to the surprise and confusion of passers-by — before disappearing as suddenly as they appeared.

The first flash mobs were started in New York in 2003 as a social experiment, but their popularity boomed. Famous events have included a silent disco at London Underground stations, where participants were encouraged to dance wildly to their own personal music player, and a mass pillow fight which took place in 25 cities around the world simultaneously.

Yahoo!'s users by surprise saw thousands of individually designed coloured space hoppers bounce across the screen for 40 seconds at exactly 3 pm, before vanishing.

Source: http://shopperinvasion.askmedia.yahoo.com/uk/watch
Herd Mentality

It’s twelve midnight.

My eyes are glued to the monitor,

Alert fingers type furiously,

I’m conversing with friends across the world.

The chat is on Facebook,

While the other window monitors my mail,

A third zips through my RSS feeds,

My head is like the flying Twitter Whale.

I have been to MySpace,

Networked on LinkedIn,

And most recently on board Google Plus

I signed up for my communication needs.

I doze off,

Wake up,

Make a cup of coffee and asked myself

Why am I watching my fingers dance?

What do I get from all this mayhem?

Realization struck;

Virtual Talk has changed my lifestyle

Most of my friends are digital,

Most of my work floating in space,

It was the way of the world,

I am just one among the herd.

It’s time I get back to my body

Time to walk away from the ‘herd mentality’

I head back to sites that I can control,

Perhaps, my friends will follow me?

Paidamoyo Muzulu

Quick Bytes

Godwin’s Law states that “As an online discussion grows longer, the probability of a comparison involving Nazis or Hitler approaches 1 (100%).” From my experience, all online forums show certain common traits - a sense of belonging and identity which is comparable to what one experiences in one’s school or college groups. In that sense, the Internet has been able to replicate a real-life experience of that of a group of friends discussing ‘stuff’ over a common table, with value-added features like images and videos, apps, music, documents etc that make interactions more interesting. - Dwarkanath Prabhu

We call it ‘organized chaos’

Daniel Inman

Fernanda Tusa

adiTya KulKarni
Cyber Selves: Feminist Ethnographies of South Asian Women
Radhika Gajjala
http://amzn.to/nf68oy

Review:
In her book, Radhika Gajjala examines online community formations and subjectivities that are produced at the intersection of technologies and globalization. She describes the process of designing and building cyberfeminist webs for South Asian women’s communities, the generation of feminist cyber(auto)ethnographies, and offers a third-world critique of cyberfeminism. She ultimately views virtual communities as imbedded in real life communities and contexts, with human costs. The online discussions are visible, textual records of the discourses that circulate within real life communities. Her methodology involves a form of ‘cyberethnography,’ which explores the dialogic and disruptive possibilities of the virtual medium and of hypertext. Gajjala’s work addresses the political, economic, and cultural ramifications of the Internet communication explosion. This book will be a valuable reference for those with an interest in cultural studies, feminist studies, and new technologies.

V for Vendetta (2006)
Directed by James McTeigue

Based on the graphic novel by Alan Moore, V for Vendetta takes place in an alternate vision of Britain in which a corrupt and abusive totalitarian government has risen to complete power. During a threatening run in with the secret police, an unassuming young woman named Evey (Natalie Portman) is rescued by a vigilante named V (Hugo Weaving) -- a caped figure both articulate and skilled in combat. V embodies the principles of rebellion from an authoritarian state, donning a mask of vilified would-be terrorist of British history Guy Fawkes and leading a revolution sparked by assassination and destruction. Evey becomes his unlikely ally, newly aware of the cruelty of her own society and her role in it.

http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0434409/

I break silence today, and come out of the woodwork, but I had every ‘right’ not to.
In an age of increasing digital participation, silent participation must be considered participation, and left be. Not everyone needs to comment, vote, whatever else. Some may just read/watch/listen, and perhaps, appreciate. It is okay if no thumb is clicked up, no quick reply sent back. No blog written.
O designers of engagement, let us, sometimes, enjoy the noise of our computer fans as the bits whizz by. A click here and a scroll there, and pitter patter of rainfall rather than keyboard.
http://digitalnatives.in/prabhas/blogs/right-lurk

Contrarian View

Right to Lurk - Prabhas Pokharel

Internet and phone bullying causes loss of confidence and damages mental health, study shows. Nearly one in five UK youngsters have been the victim of cyberbullying, with girls affected more than boys, research suggests.

The study, by academics at Anglia Ruskin University, questioned almost 500 young people aged between 11 and 19.
Source: http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2011/aug/01/cyber-bullying-victims

Almost One-fifth of Youngsters Cyberbullied

Where Electronic Aggression Happens:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chat rooms</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web site</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instant messaging</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text messages</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Distribution of cyberbullying venues used by young people in the US, according to the Centers for Disease Control

Next Issue: Analog Relics in Digital Age
Arcade games still set your pulses on fire? Secretly hoarding your Atari game controllers? Why do we write emails like we do letters on paper? Remember the good old days of floppy discs and wrist watches? Our next issue will explore all those nostalgic analog dinosaurs! To volunteer as the Guest Editor / Writer, please get in touch with Nilofar: nilofar.ansh@gmail.com
Deadline for submission: November 10