



Impact of Social Networking Site on the Separate State Movement of Bodoland: A Descriptive Analytical Study

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Abstract

The study will deal with the comparative evaluation of representation of Bodo movement in different media and how does the representation of the agenda on separate state vary across ranges of other media and SNS, mainly in this paper Facebook is highlighted as a social networking site. We cannot avoid the implication of SNS in influencing mass for an action. At the same time the binary of inclusive and exclusive nature of SNS cannot be undermined. The study will be significant to analyse the role of media in influencing the agenda of separate Bodo state and the changing dynamics of Bodo movement in connection of the incorporation of new media platform for agenda making.

Keywords: Facebook (SNS), Bodoland, Public Sphere, New Media.

Introduction

Social networking sites (SNS) are considered to be popular destination for one to one and one to many communications. Moreover, people have been using SNS to send exigency and immediate message to each other. Facebook is also taken as a platform of communication because of its attractive features and scope to connect people from a distance. Facebook represent itself to be one of the popular platforms of participation by giving space to the participants for argument, campaigns (political in Nature), and sharing real clues by posting videos and photos.

The exacted Bodoland by the separatist groups is an area located in the north bank of Brahmaputra River in the state of Assam in north east region of India. In Assam, under Bodoland, there are four districts Kokrajhar, Baksa, Chirang and Udalguri. More than 50 years, the Bodo people have been demanding a separate state in India where they used different techniques to full fill their demands like campaigns, dharana, really etc.

The culture of the Bodo people is very rich in Assam which is influenced by the land where they currently live. For a long time, Bodos have been farmers, with a strong tradition of fishing, keeping poultry, piggery, rice and jute cultivation, and betel nut plantation¹. The Bodo linguistic ethnic group arrived the earliest and settled in the region. Bodo people are mainly into Bathouism religion from ages². However, it is worth noticing that 'Bodo' people are using Social Networking Sites in order create a public sphere around the issue on having a separate state for them.

Defining the problem: Participation in SNS demands digital literacy. This creates a divide between who can use SNS as a platform for communication and who cannot. Justification of

actual representation of different community including village and urban in SNS has been a problem as most of village people are not even aware of SNS. Available infrastructure can count to be another problem. Yet scholars in various research paper view that influence of SNS in mass mobilisation for a cause is unavoidable.

In connection to the problem, the study will deal with the comparative evaluation of representation of Bodo movement in different media i.e. print, television and radio and how does the representation of the agenda on separate state vary across ranges of other media and SNS. We cannot avoid the implication of SNS in influencing mass for an action. At the same time the binary of inclusive and exclusive nature of SNS cannot be undermined. The study will be significant to analyse the role of media in influencing the agenda of separate Bodo state and the changing dynamics of Bodo movement in connection of the incorporation of new media platform for agenda making.

Aims: This research has been done for the uses of SNS in Bodo Community in connection to Facebook through internet. The main aim of this research is to look at the scenario of Bodoland movement in the Facebook.

Objectives: The main objectives of the research are given below: i. To examine the influence of Facebook in Bodoland movement. ii. To examine the awareness among Bodo people who used SNS. iii. To analyse the relations between Facebook and Bodo people.

New Media concept: New media is a broad term in media studies that emerged in the latter part of the 20th century³. For example, new media holds out a possibility of on-demand access to content anytime, anywhere, on any digital device, as

well as interactive user feedback, creative participation and community formation around the media content.

Theoretical Framework: The researcher has employed Public Sphere Theory to assess the present status of Bodoland Movement in facebook.

The public sphere theory has applied in this research because of social networking site (Facebook) has been given a space to the Bodo community for bring out some discussions regarding Bodoland Movement. Each group of Bodos in Facebook they discusses mostly about Bodoland related topic on Facebook. They share ideas, information, opinion and sometime debate through Social networking site. Like earlier Coffee hut facebook give a platform where people can gathered and get a sphere from sitting in different places⁴.

The public sphere conception continues to hold centre stage in debates and visions of radical democratic society, and J'urgenHabermas' work continues to be the most popular starting point for developing this conception.

The public sphere is an area in social life where individuals can come together to freely discuss and identify societal problems, and through that discussion influence political action. It is "a discursive space in which individuals and groups congregate to discuss matters of mutual interest and, where possible, to reach a common judgment⁵.

It is important to determine whether the social networking sites and the surrounding technologies have the ability to bring a public sphere among the people to revolutionize the political sphere. The discussion should be informed primarily with an examination of the Bodo nation of the public sphere and the ideological discourse that accompanies it.

The idea of "the public" is closely tied to democratic ideas that call for citizen or a community participation in public affairs. Dewey (1927) insisted that inquiry and communication are the basis for a democratic society, and highlighted the merits of group deliberation over the decisions of a single authority. He argued for a communication democracy where individuals came together to create and preserve a good life in general people. The term 'public' connotes the ideas of citizenship, commonality which can be envisioned more clearly in open exchanges of political thoughts and ideas, such as that took place in ancient Greek agoras or colonial era town halls. Public is something which is not private, but accessible and observable by all⁶.

As public space the internet provides yet another forum for political deliberation. As public sphere, the internet could facilitate discussion that promotes democratic exchange of ideas and opinions. A virtual sphere enhances democracy. This research examines not only political discussion online (SNS- Facebook), but also the contribution of people in the movement of Bodoland

and demanding separate state through Facebook among the community.

Some articles like 'Is the internet a better public sphere? Comparing Old and New Media in the US and Germany', highlighted the fact that speedy and cheap access to information provided on the SNS or the internet promotes citizen or community activism. Others focus on the ability of the internet (SNS) to bring individuals together and help them to overcome geographical and other boundaries.

Methodology

Broadly a qualitative approach has been adopted to conduct this research, but in order to find the answers to certain research questions Qualitative research on the other hand in concerned with qualitative phenomenon i.e. phenomenon relating to or involving quality or kind. Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social and human problem as Creswell described⁷.

In this research, triangulation method is employed which refers to the use of more than one approach to the investigation of a research question in order to enhance confidence in the ensuing findings. Since much social research is founded on the use of a single research method and as such may suffer from limitations associated with that method or from the specific application of it, triangulation offers the prospect of enhanced confidence.

Three techniques have been employed to collect the primary data from the respondents. Those are as followed. i. Survey, ii. In-depth interview and iii. Observational and Web Survey

Sampling method: The sample size is taken 25. All 25 samples are chosen from the Tezpur University. The simple has been restricted to Bodo peoples (mostly Students/ Serviceman) under the age group of 16 to 38. Samples were randomly selected from different departments of the University who are active members of Facebook, social networking sites.

Survey: Survey was conducted among 25 users of social networking sites (Facebook) in Tezpur University, Tezpur, who are randomly selected. 25 users are mostly from Bodo community chosen from the age bracket of 16 years to above 38 years who were university students and serviceman. The age group (16-38yrs) was chosen since they are factually eligible to have their own opinion basd on their learning and education and the exposure of events that have occurred across them.

Another reason for choosing this age group is that: They are mentally matured, View world idealistically, Become involved with world outside, Relationships stabilize in that, They start preach and practise culture, They like online chatting and, Seeks to firmly establish independence

In depth Interview: In this research, some in depth interviews of certain members of community opinion leaders and some Bodo

political leaders have been taken in order to find out more about the Bodoland movement in the past and its connection to the present communication scenario.

Observation and Web Survey: This research also involves observation-both direct and participatory method, where direct observation is executed during the time spent with family members, peers, friends, colleagues or classmates, thus, the researcher tries to find informal facts related to movement for separatist state. The other technique, participatory observation is employed while being active members of the Bodo groups in Facebook and taking part in online conversation or giving comment on profile wall, thus, the researcher attempts to find the instant and delayed reaction and response of the other participants in group.

Web Survey: The researcher has taken some of the strong comments which are posted by SNS user on facebook profile wall and has analysed those. The units of analysis are based on following questions: i. Who said what?, ii. The topic people have discussed mostly?, iii. Comments are based on political purpose or on individual interest?, iv. In the name of Bodoland movement what do people discuss in groups?, v. What an active member usually do in facebook?, vi. The feedback of powerful comments, vii. The result of the online discussion, viii. How many people from Bodo community in numbers are the members of Bodo groups in Facebook, ix. Number of active members in each group, x. Photos uploaded in facebook group, xi. Debates and comments in facebook account, xii. Timeline updates, xiii. Facebook Online Chat, xiv. Virtual or real existence of Bodo groups in facebook, xv. The real or fakeness of the existing bodo groups in facebook

Results and Discussion

Data Analyses and Discussion: In this research, we have taken 25 samples based on Yes/No type questions and also some subjective type questions. The findings are given below-

After studying the questionnaire, we have found that maximum internet users are in the age group of 16 to 31in the Tezpur University campus, Tezpur.

**Table-1
 Frequently Internet user**

Days	Number of User
Once a week	1
Twice/Thrice a week	2
Regularly	22
Never in a week	0

Total=25

**Table-2
 People Affiliated to Bodo group in Facebook**

Conditions	Number of User
Yes	21
No	4

Total=25

The table 2: It says that the population of affiliated to Bodo group in Facebook is more than the Unaffiliated users. Out of 25 people no. of 21 said they are affiliated to some Bodo groups in Facebook and 4 are not. If we notice the table-1 and table-2 then 88% people are regular internet user and among them 84% people are affiliated to Bobo group in Facebook.

**Table-3
 Purpose of using Bodo group in Facebook**

Purposes	User View
To keep touch with friends (Networking and impression management)	4
To keep touch with community (Networking and participation)	10
To keep track of news updates	9
Any other uses	1

Total=24 (Sample was 25)

Out of 25 users one person is not affiliated to the Bodo group. Among the 25 users most of the users used the Bodo group in Facebook as a medium of “To keep touch with community”. Secondly they used to keep track of news updates and apart from that all-news updates are related to the Bodoland movement and the Bodo area (BTC). Because the Bodo groups In Facebook are all about Bodo people.

But, among those 25 people one has ticked on the option “any other uses” and commented “To make area of Bodoland Movement”. The comment “To make area of Bodoland movement”, indicates that some of the group members are using the group as a platform to play the role of activist.

**Table-4
 How many peoples know about Bodoland Movement?**

Option	User View
Yes	25
No	0

Total=25

Here, This table 4: shows that the Bodos are known to Bodoland Movement. But it is important to know that “What they know about the movement”. To understand the answer, we gave them a question. As the result of that question I have found some common answers like: “Bodoland demand is a legal demand according to the constitution”, “Separate State demand”, “Divide Assam 50/50”, “It was lunched 2nd march 1987 under leadership of Upendranath Brahma”, “Fighting for our right” “To save the identity (culture, heritage, language etc.) of the Bodos”.

The 100% people gave the similar answer regarding Bodoland. It makes us clear that the basic concept of Bodoland is known to all.

Table-5
Facilitate participation to Non-Bodo people in the Facebook group

Option	User View
Yes	19
No	6
	Total= 25

The Bodo groups in Facebook allow the Non-Bodo people to participate in the discussion as the data said. But some people are not agreeing because of Non-Bodo people do not speak Bodo language and they can't write also and mainly in Bodo groups the users usually use Bodo language in their conversation. For that purpose Non-Bodo people can take participation but feedback is very less.

Table-6
Facebook can give requisite information about Bodo movement among people

Option	User View
Yes	19
No	6
	Total=25

Table-7
Facebook bring the feeling of patriotism among Bodo youngsters

Option	User View
Yes	22
No	3
	Total=25

Table-8
Facebook can be credited for the popularity of the movement among the public

Option	User View
Yes	19
No	6
	Total=25

Table-9
Facebook can give information faster than print media and TV channels

Option	User View
Yes	16
No	9
	Total=25

From the above four tables (Table 6:, Table 7:, Table 8:, Table 9:) we found that some of the people support the Bodoland movement(Average 76%) with the help of Facebook. More number of people thinks that Facebook give information about Bodoland and that information gives the feeling of patriotism among Bodo youngsters. If we see the above four table in the same time than we will get that Facebook can be credited for the

popularity of Bodoland movement among the public and Facebook is the faster medium than the other media. The average 76% people are agree the conditions and average 24% peoples are not agree the conditions.

Table-10
Facebook helps the mass awareness program for the movement

Option	User View
Yes	17
No	8
	Total=25

The table 10: says that Facebook helps people to bring mass awareness on the Bodoland movement. Bodo people used many techniques to make aware the community like- Photo, Benner, Posters, Newspapers and Magazines. Among the many medium of bringing awareness people have selected Facebook also. Rest people are not support because of some topic bring propaganda, biasness, and mostly they do not believe the all exist accounts because it may be Fake account. From the study some of the people even do not like the comments what people write in the Facebook wall. Apart from the Bodoland movement, some of disagree people written in questioner that some strangers write some bad comments about Bodo girls on the wall in Facebook group and they feel that those comments are not related to movement and it is not good for the Bodo culture upliftment.

Table-11
Separate state can give due recognition to the indigenous Bodo culture

Option	User View
Yes	25
No	0
	Total= 25

Table-12
People in favour of a separate state policy

Option	User View
Yes	25
No	0
	Total=25

Table-13
Separate state can possibly give economic sustenance to the indigenous Bodo community

Option	User View
Yes	25
No	0
	Total=25

Table-14
Favour of Bodoland as a separate territory

Option	User View
Yes	25
No	0
	Total=25

Finally, the above Tables (Table 11, 12, 13, 14) assume that all the Bodo people are supporter of Bodoland movement and they want a separate state. Because the Bodo people want to preserve their indigenous Bodo culture and they think separate state can possibly bring economic sustenance to the community. From our study we have found that 100% people are in favour of Bodoland and separate territory also they hardly believe that separate state will help them to promote the Bodo indigenous language, culture and developed the community.

Restuls and Discussions

This study was conducted to analyse the relationship among Bodo community and Facebook in connection to the Bodoland movement.

Present profile of the community: Bodos are found in large numbers in the Lower and Middle parts of the Brahmaputra Valley, namely in the districts of Goalpara, Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Barpeta, Nalbari, Kamrup and Darrang. A sizeable numbers of Bodos have migrated to other states viz., Nagaland, Tripura, Meghalaya, and Arunachal Pradesh.

The BTC comprises of four districts- Udalguri, Baga, Chirang and Kokrajhar. The population of BTC area as per 2001 Census report is 29.2 lakhs, out of which the ST population is constitute 52 per cent and 3 per cent of the total Bodo population of live in urban area. The average density of the population in BTC is 326 Sq.K.m. compared to 340 per Sq.K.m. The literacy rate is merely 61.3 per cent among the Bodo population in Assam. Agriculture is the main source of livelihood of Bodo community. About 90 per cent of the Bodos and other tribals depend upon agriculture for livelihood; almost 70 per cent are landless and over 80 percent live in economic poverty⁸.

Community related to Facebook: Facebook is an online social networking service. Its name comes from the colloquial name for the book given to students at the start of the academic year by some American university administrations, to help students to know one another.

With the increase in the literacy rate, the people came to know more about the new media and the uses of internet. In this research, It is found that maximum youngsters of new generation, between the age group 16 to 31, are regular user of internet and they are mostly aware about Social networking sites. However, the uses of the social networking site among Bodos are comparatively less in number since the literacy rate is

low in the Bodo community. Most of the users of social networking site in Bodo community are students. With the influence of young generation some members of the middle age group are also now-a-days approaching towards the social networking site.

Influences of Facebook (SNS) in Bodo society: In this research it was found that there are more than 25 groups in connection with Bodoland movement but at present 13 of them are active. Some of the active groups names along with the number of members are given below (The data given bellow are collected on 15th of November, 2013) table-15

Table-15

Group Name	Members
Truth of Bodoland	
Bodoland Demand	1,860
Bodoland Friends Zone	5,711
Bodoland Times	6,264
All Bodo Research Scholars Forum	3,524
We Want Bodoland	240
All Boro Students Union	3,859
We want separate state Boroland	2502
No Bodoland no rest	1,289
Bodoland	1,199
Divide Assam 50/50(Create a separate Bodoland)	120
In solidarity with world Boro historic	436
The Bodo	1,599
	3,498

These above are currently active in the scenario of Bodoland movement. The social networking site gives the individual choice to the user what they want to do. Each and every individual have the privacy to comment and share their views in the wall.

Web survey analysis: In this research the main objective of web survey is to study the Bodoland movement and its connection to the different groups in Facebook. Facebook is a platform for the group members or the users who are mainly discuss about the surroundings of local area that means the Bodoland (BTC). The group users usually use to share some local information to bring unity, related to the movement. Each of the Bodo people has their community sentiment so the active member of the group discussion is effective to the people.

Now, the end number of students in same community is studying in different part (The user profile of the students indicates) of India but the patriotism of the students age group between 16 to 31 are get a platform to exchange their thoughts among them in Facebook. Mainly here 13 Facebook Bodo groups have studied. The nature and characteristics of some group are given below.

Bodoland Demand: The administrator of the group in Facebook Bodoland Demand declared as “This group is for those who have a strong and dedicated heart to the Demand of separate state Bodoland curving out 50/50 from so called Assam of today, because we have our own culture, tradition, language, identity and birth right to rule our own land left for us by our ancestors and as the history of the Bodo people in this part of land doesn't speak a lie, and it is true History repeats itself.

No Bodoland no Rest: This group is only for Bodoland Lovers as the group administrator said. The total member of this group is 1212. In this group the members discussed about new upcoming updates on Bodoland like Dharon, Rally etc.

Divide Assam 50/50(Create a separate Bodoland): The administrator of this group has written as “Bodoland is an area located in the north bank of Brahmaputra river in the state of Assam in north east region of India, by the foothills of Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh; inhabited predominantly by Bodo language speaking ethnic group”.

Bodoland Times: “Bodoland Times” is a Facebook group which give the day to day Bodo Community news in comment wall. The main motive of this particular group is to give Bodo community information to the Bodo masses. The given picture is taken from Facebook account where the cover picture has uploaded Bodofa Upendranath Brahma. Bodofa means “The father of Bodos” who has changed the Bodo community.

We want separate State: This group is also the same group like given above. Mainly this group gives the platform to the community people to discuss the different issues on Bodos.

Discussion of In-depth Interview: From in-depth and oral interview (not systematic) with some well-educated persons I found some interesting comments to look at. They are given below: i. “With the help of Facebook, people can bring a great unity to create Bodoland”. ii. “Until and unless without involvement of mentally and physically it is difficult to get separate state”. iii. “Facebook can bring awareness among people but sometimes bias posts create bad situation”. iv. “If handled properly, Facebook can be very powerful tool of inspiring the youngsters”. v. “Facebook may not be the proper platform to give information on Bodo movement. It can be only a place where we can share information's of issues, but yes, it can be a place to start something”.

From the interviews conducted, the common view of the people is that, Facebook have the ability to give definite direction to the Bodoland movement only if the user knows the moral ethics and Facebook Communication techniques. Apart from that, sometimes in Facebook there are so many groups and a diverse account of Bodo groups whose members have different thoughts among them.

As per the views, there should not be more than One Bodo group in Facebook which will maintain the unity of the Bodos. And encouraging comments and status on Bodo group can give some spiritual power to the community people. The people can use Facebook as medium of bringing a mass information tool for their movement.

Results: i. Majority of the internet users in the community are educated. ii. A significant number of the Bodos are associated in the Facebook Bodo groups. iii. The main topics of discussion among the members of Bodo Groups are based on Bodo's identity and the movement. iv. A significant number of Facebook users falls under the age group 16 to 31 years. v. A significant number of people are in favour of Bodoland as separate state. vi. Bodo people believe that separate state can bring development among them.

Conclusion

This study was one of the first attempts to look into communication between people through the social networking site (Facebook) among Bodo people. While conducting this study, it has been observed that the people of Bodo community are affiliated to the Facebook account. They have not been able to conduct a mass get together of people at a time. So they selected Facebook to share mass information among the people at the same time from a particular place.

Through this study it could be concluded that, given one opportunity, namely a platform to raise their voice, the people of this community can rise beyond their current state of life and with collective efforts, they can change their situation. They think that there is enough potential within the Bodo community to set up, run and manage a Separate state.

They think that the contemporary situations are very unacceptable for the Bodo people, the possible reason being that there is no proper infrastructure among them. They believe that if the Bodoland has been conceptualised by the government then the Bodo community might bring development by themselves.

As expressed by some well-educated Bodoleader's, it is better for them if they get Bodoland in near future in terms of infrastructure, human resources and financial stability. This research is successful in the sense that Facebook can perform as a better platform and make the Bodoland movement a highly successful one.

Before conducting this research, there was three objectives which have been successful with the help this study. The first objective was to examine the influence of Facebook in Bodoland movement. As per the first objective it is found that many of Bodo groups are affiliated to the Facebook account and their main aim was almost same. There are more than 25 Bodo groups in Facebook and during the study it was noted that among them, 13 groups are very active in the sense of day to

day regular status updates, comment updates, and other facilities of Facebook.

Second objective was to examine the awareness among Bodo people who used SNS. This objective was fulfilled by conducting a survey. Here, 25 community people have been taken as a sample to know the connection between Facebook and Bodo community who are very close to the SNS and its different groups. The survey result says that a significant number of people are very close to the Facebook and the Boro groups who participate in the group conversations through commenting and sharing status. The maximum people are fall under the age group of 16 to 31 and maximum are student and serviceman. The study was not conducted among those people who do not know the concept of SNS. According to the survey report a significant people are in favour of Bodoland movement in Facebook. Similarly in Web survey analysis and in-depth interview Comments are also says the same result.

Acknowledgement

Accordingly the last objective of this research was to analyse the relations between Facebook and Bodo people. After studying Facebook groups, it seems that the community people are very sick to get separate state at present. For that purpose the Bodo people are using Facebook groups to share information updates and discussions. The relation of community people and Facebook is very close, because the motives of the people using Facebook groups are almost same to all.

As expressed by the opinion leaders, Facebook is not a proper platform to discuss such political issues, it can be only a place where people can share their information's of issues, but it can be a place to start something.

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