IS SOCIAL MEDIA CREATING INFORMATION OVERLOAD CAUSING ANALYSIS PARALYSIS?

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Present era is synonymous with social media. The beauty of social media is that education is not a restriction for its usage, with few basic tips even an illiterate can learn its usage and gain mastery. Advent of IT revolution has transformed decision making in a big way.. Outcome of this is high productivity and profitability, which are the two important deciding factors of sustainability of any firm whether big or small.

What is the in-thing called social media? Generally we can call it as web-based technology that supports creation and sharing of information through virtual communities and networks. They are internet application with wide ranging functions like text messaging, sending photos or videos which have high capacity, not otherwise available in the existing communication technology. There is security of information but definitely lacks authenticity and accuracy. Organizational set up of yester years had the concept of grapevine which is prevalent even now, that transmitted messages at a rapid rate and always ran parallel to formal communication. Same is the case with social media. For entertainment or maintaining contact social media is a useful tool, but taking the messages seriously at random may result in chaotic condition. Credit should be given to the development of mobile platforms like the smart phones and tablet computers which spread the acceptability of social media to such an extent that it has become an inseparable part of every individual. It has extended reach but the credibility has always remained a suspect. The major step of transforming the transmission system from monologic to dialogic model goes to its credit. We have numerous social media available. Some of them are: What's app, Facebook, Face book messenger, Baidu Tieba, Twitter, Linked in, Instagram, We chat, You tube. The list is not conclusive. Current acceptability for these communication platforms is very high and moving forward at a rapid rate. Social thinkers attribute increase in social bonding or connectivity to the arrival of social media. It has also introduced sharing in concept for decision making. It has provided an avenue for creation of interactive exchanges with interested groups on topics of mutual interest. Merriam Webster has defined social media as "Forms of Electronic Communication through which people create on line communities to share information, ideas, personal messages etc" [1].

Decision making is a cognitive process through which all managers have to undergo. It is estimated that lion's share of the time a manager spends is on this activity. The inevitability of this pursuit is to bring out the assortment of conviction amongst the available perspectives. The core value, organisational culture, deciders

hold on the system and knowledge all play an important part of the manner in which decision making is undertaken or the outcome as a solution to the problem. It has been stated that "Decision making can be regarded as a problem solving activity terminated by a solution deemed to be optimal, or at least satisfactory. It is therefore a process which can be more or less rational or irrational and can be based on explicit or tacit knowledge and beliefs". [2] A manger's accomplishment in decision making depends on the availability of information pertaining to the challenge, communication system available, needs of the decider and the environment. Often we do not find that the best option is selected, why? The primary reasons are information overload and analysis paralysis. Information overload has been aptly expressed by Crystal C Hall and his colleagues as 'an illusion of knowledge which means that as individuals encounter too much of knowledge it can interfere with their ability to make rational decisions' [3]. It is not quite frequent that a manager encounters analysis paralysis nevertheless it can be described as 'addressing a situation too much or reaching a state of over thinking resulting in arriving at a decision not to take a decision' [4]. Here the outcome is similar to a paralytic attack.

Andreas Kaplan has differentiated social media applications as 'space timers, space locators, quick timers and slow timers' [5]. Aniket Kittur, Bongowon Suh, and Ed H. Chi took Wikis under examination and indicated that, "One possibility is that distrust of wiki content is not due to the inherently mutable nature of the system but instead to the lack of available information for judging trustworthiness."[6 Social media is also an important source for news. Report suggested that in the United Kingdom, trust in news which comes from social media sources is low, compared to news from other sources (e.g. online news from traditional broadcaster or online news from national newspapers). Trust on social media messages declines with the increase of age. It has been seen that in the new social media communication environment nature of comments will bias information processing even if the source is trustworthy. This is an important aspect to be considered when social media communications are used for decision making.

 When we use the term social media it is for describing sites. First attempt to develop and popularize networking sites was a failure, but now it has caught up primarily due to the introduction and improvement in smart phones. After this event, social net working sites have increased rapidly. It is believed that users and fascinated clients spent one-fourth of their time in these net works. Statistics which are unconfirmed indicates that large majority of adolescents in USA have Facebook account, say almost 84%.[7] The spread was so rapid that in a year's time the increase of usage in combined-static as well as mobile platform was around 100%. Viral spread of social media content is a feature which is available with all social media sites; whether it is forward button of What's app or Twitter's re-tweet button or pin function, share option, re-blog function. As per Jan H Kietzmann, Kristopher Hermkens, Ian PP McCarthy and Bruno S Silvestre this is "presenting a

framework that defines social media by using seven functional building blocks namely, identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationship, reputation and groups".[8] In this reputation is the aspect we would concentrate on. This word can have multitude characteristics and meaning on social media platforms, but here it is related to the matter of trust. The reason for this is so simple because, we have yet not been able to determine the qualitative criteria of the messages originated or shared as these sites rely on 'mechanical Turks' for verification; a tool which automatically gather together user generated information to determine trustworthiness.

It has been found that the trust in social media changes with age groups. Those in the teens have adequate trust, and people from the age group of 24-35 have maximum trust that they mostly believe in everything which comes up, but for those of the middle age and older lot find it a lot lesser to indicate a drastic decline of trust. [9] One of the negative effects of social media which we are concerned about in this paper is the information overload. Here in a short span of time with high quality variance lot of information is pumped in to clog ones mental capacity to create a temporary shutdown. It can lead to depression and other self-esteem related issues. Bo Han a social media researcher says that social media users can experience "social media burnout" [10], which display ambivalence, emotive exhaustion and depersonalization. These are state of confusion, stress and emotional detachment. This is typically experienced when social media messages generate an overwhelming quantum of useless information. Social media has also affected communication styles, where abbreviations and hash-tags culture have been introduced to improve time management. May be one has to get used to them! Social media as a means of communication has contributed in a major way. Its spread is so large that over 1158 crore users of various social media have been recorded [11]. To a large extent it has contributed to the decision making process? Has it been good or bad is a question we must introspect. We should also ask whether there were cases of quality variance. Furthermore has it lead to information clogging, cluttering or exhaustion due to multiplicity of source and duplicity of same message being received from numerous sources appealing to have the authority as the originator particularly when it comes to the subject of decision making. It may also be worthwhile to see whether social media in the field of decision making has lead to decision making paralysis and important decisions have been avoided to support the jargon 'no decision is also a decision'. Considering all these the ultimate contemplation to be discerned is to scientifically state that the improvement in decision making by the influence of social media has been flawless. If so, is there any contributing evidence to substantiate the claim.

For this we require to analyze and the procedure adopted for data collection was multi stage strata sampling by telephonic survey. After consultation, the target group selected were broadly divided in to two categories based on the age bracket; below 35 years of age and above that limit. The second stage was discerning the classes. In

the next stage the preliminary details on usage of social media by type, platforms were collected. All cases where single platform was used were avoided for the next stage except in the case of farmers where consequent to the low rate of response even those who used only one platform were included. When this stage reached finality we had homed on to around hundred respondents who were selected for the next stage. The methodology used in formulation of this paper is largely qualitative and to a very miniscule portion quantitative. After collecting the data then statistical techniques were used for establishing a relationship between the data and unknowns, thereafter evaluate the accuracy of the results obtained. Hypothesis testing has been carried out using 'z' test. If the calculated z value is larger than the critical value of z at a particular level of significance, then reject the null hypothesis otherwise accept. A significance level of one has been taken, which is fairly accurate. Based on the focus of study the hypothesis selected has been; **"Has the impact of social media resulted in information overload resulting in analysis paralysis?"** During the initial survey we had already concluded from the responses and secondary data available that there is evidence on influence of social media in providing wealth of information and hence proceeded with a judgemental assertion that it contributed to these causes. However in this situation we did not want to make such assumptions. Hence we used statistical methods for testing and z-test which is based on the normal probability distribution and is used for comparing the sample proportion to a theoretical value of population proportion or judging the difference in proportions of two independent samples when *n* happens to be large. In this situation the population is normal and infinite and sample size is large, Ho is one-sided hence z-test is used for testing hypothesis and the test statistic z.

Allais paradox is an occurrence when irrational decisions are taken when people are faced with contradictory choices for the same problem. In the bounded rationality group decision making concept Herbert A Simon [12] brought out that decision making is influenced by the information, time available to the decider and his trait. A paper by Dr Lynn Fitzgibbons of the health department has understood that 'criticisms of social media can range from the ease of use of specific platform and their capabilities, disparity of information available, issues with trust worthiness, reliability of information presented and impact of social media use on an individual's concentration.'[13] At the same time it can be favourably said that social media has positive effects such as democratization of the internet. Similar papers on the subject have been written by others including the much acclaimed book 'The Cult of the Amateur' by Andrew Keen [14]. In her book 'The Culture of Connectivity' Jose Van Dijck [15] has considered that in order to be familiar with social media platform, its technological dimensions have to be seen from social and cultural angle. Eric Ehrmann contends that 'social media in the form of open dialogue creates a patina of inclusiveness that covers traditional economic interest that is structured to the wealthy' [15]. Rainic and Wellman have argued that 'media making now has become participation work which changes communication systems' [16]. However Malcom Gladwel [17] considers that

these protests are overstated, rather it facilitates. Social media definitely has questionability about reliability, ownership of content, privacy, authenticity and commercialization. It has been seen that much contribution has not been made in the subject on impact of social media in decision making. Hence through the medium of this paper an attempt has been made to explore the subject of facilitation of decision making by web based technology communication.

Jordi Panegua has qualified that 'social media has strong influence on business activities and business performance'.[20] What are the social media resources which are used in business? These can be considered as social capital, publicized preferences, social marketing and social corporate networking. Social capital is the ability of the social media to make a link between the society and organisation, and how do they increase corporate social performance using social media. Then, how well they can contribute in increasing the social marketing as well as on firm's financial capabilities? It also facilitating an informal net working which is aided between corporate and the other people where by knowledge on trends can be identified. CRM is an in thing. For getting information on the customer retention and potential customers' social media is a good tool. It is often felt that there is a strong evidence of favouritism in this regard which negates the facilitating aspect. It also aids in breaking into the market or society. It is true that a new inductee to social media may require some training, but that is not the case with most of the valued customers, they are well versant with social media and its platforms. It is possible that by social media tracking we are able to get certain feedbacks about their product and services. For that matter a member of a producing company can alert the management about a good or bad comment posted of which he is also a member. These building blocks help in ascertaining engagement needs. So the viral negative sentiments can be addressed understanding their needs. [21] Now little bit about the interesting field of bots or social media automation. Bots impersonate natural human interactions. To the customers it appears like human interactions least realising that they are artificial. It affects the quality of data because of which it can be called as digital cannibalism. We also have something known as cyborgs which are a combination of humans and bots. In this often humans interact and during his absence cyborgs tweet. It has the characteristic behaviour of promoting fake news. When detected the human parts owns up that it was he/she who was all through in the activity. Data mining is also a facility of social media which effected by various groups including banks and political parties to extract analysable data.

Information overload is "a gap between the volume of information and the tools we have to assimilate it" [22]. Excessive information affects problem processing and tasking, which influences decision-making. Crystal C. Hall and colleagues described an "illusion of knowledge"[10], which means that as individuals encounter too much knowledge it can interfere with their ability to make rational decisions. It has been observed that in case of complex decisions or MCDA the advent of internet based technology aided communication or the social

networking sites such as: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Snapchat is approached. Social media technologies take many different forms including blogs, business networks, enterprise social networks, forums, microblogs, photo sharing, products/services review, social bookmarking, social gaming, social networks, video sharing, and virtual worlds. They all have resulted in overloading of information which rather than aiding the decision maker puts him in a dilemma and then the decider is compelled to go by the instinctive method to decide leaving behind all scientific methods and statistical tools. This results in poor decisions at higher levels which have resulted in catastrophe both in terms of image of the organisation as well as undesirable acts.

As indicated earlier, having chosen 'z' test as a researcher we are compelled to follow certain criteria regarding the sample. For the purpose of equity in selection, it was decided to keep the sample size same in all groups. Unfortunately, we could not strictly follow the stricture as the content variation as well as context dissimilarity did not permit so. Nevertheless a near parity was maintained. In this case if it was a pro-rata case we might have been compelled to include a largely majority of youth, because almost 90% of the youth have access and approach to these social media. Compelled by the circumstances they are forced to decide, and for this they find it convenient to obtain facts from social media. But such an approach would have defeated the very purpose. The target population chosen was across the society. During the telephonic survey of the population numbering 900 with the exception of around 113 who did not respond and can be categorised as 'don't know types', rest of the respondents were of the firm belief that social media played a contributing and pivotal role in information gathering for decision making. So we can conclude that social media contributes to information gathering for decision making. The next part of the survey was the effect of the information so gathered in decision making. We are testing the information overload caused by the social media resulting in analysis paralysis. By using a one percent alpha level we intend to reduce the chances of Type I error. Solving the formula, we get: Z =**1.288644.**. The z-score associated with a one percent alpha level / 2 is **2.576**. Now we develop on to compare the calculated z-score with the table z-score. In this case the calculated value of 'z' **1.288644** is less than the tabulated value of 'z' **2.576** at one percent level of significance. Hence we can accept the null hypothesis. Hence the claim is accepted, which meant that our assertion that impact of social media has caused information overload creating analysis paralysis.

At this juncture it is pertinent to discuss certain other issues related to decision making. There are occasions when the decider or a group under taking a decision making process gets in to a state of excessive analytical procedures which can be termed as over analyzing. When the decider reaches this stage it is a dilemma, it can be owing to various reasons including information over load, clutter, variance, acceptability etc. It is stated that the decider or the group is in an analysis paralysis. Any negative impact of post-decision making analysis can also hamper the decision making process. Another important factor which affects decision making is the

concept of rational choice theory, because when certain sections oppose a decision taken or consider it as inappropriate it cannot be considered wrong or unsuitable, but more often than not the decider falls prey to this phobia of acceptability of the decision by the group. Then as we have in motivation the expectancy levels, similarly in decision making also there is inner conscious of the decider which is always prompting him the subjective probability of occurrence. Hence he would be biased to take a decision keeping this factor in mind, which may lead to an incorrect or not so good decision. It has been proved beyond doubt that biases influences decision making. People who have greater left prefrontal cortex activity are more defensive and tend to gather facts that support conclusions. Some others are satisfied with the first available solution and they prefer not to go beyond it. A very difficult and disturbing trait of the decider is the cognitive inertia. Recency and repetition of information is perhaps the most common inclination some researchers have which with high variance as in the case of social media can lead to an unsuitable decision. Decisions are often guided by the purposefulness of future consequences. The age often provides a guide for decision making. It does not mean adults can't take logical decision, but it only suggests that the young, immature or inexperienced tend to take rash decisions in comparison to the older people. This is further complicated or compounded by the strong belief by each of these groups considering the other as potential critics or compulsive auditors of the decision taken by the other. What needs to be remembered is that in all cases these biases should not affect the technique used or information analyzed by the decider.

Finally to conclude, it can be said that Social media has certain negative aspects. These are information overload, scanty information, unverifiable information, and cluttering of information. The need of the hour is to concede the fact that social media is going to have high acceptability and it is going to stay. So ideally we are at a stage of compromise because of the spread, information value and volume of information speedily available. Therefore the effort should be to reduce the negative impact of social media for decision making and facilitate the positive impact to gainfully use social media. As far as the value of information content social media is the prime suspect especially with the advent of blots and cyberogs. These complicate the verifiability; authenticity of information obtained from social media and leaves it as information Pandora's Box. The ability to reduce the negative impact of social media like quality, verifiability, authenticity should be resorted to and positive impact like spread, availability increased to make its effective use in business and contribute towards decision making. How can we do it? It not with the use of mechanical Turks but by awareness and social monitoring we can improve the veracity. Because with the development of technology these intrusions into privacy and accuracy will become rampant so the decider needs to develop a knowledge creation portal to sustain them. It may not be difficult with a little bit of social monitoring and procedural auditing. It would be apt to bring out at this stage that individual decision making differs greatly from group decision making. This is largely due to the fact that

intuitive skill of each individual is different from the others. But the techniques adopted in either of them can be used by the other. In individual decision making we may adopt the decisional balance sheet technique, which is nothing but understanding the advantages of each option available as a solution to the problem, then whichever outscores is selected. This method was initiated by Benjamin Franklin as recommended by Plato in Protagoras [23]. Sometimes we can prioritise the options available keeping the opportunity cost as the right of way. We can also, rather than finding all the alternatives and selecting one, go on till we get a satisfactory alternative and then that becomes the decision. Simplest of all is going along with the authority. Sometimes we can go for a decision which can be against any advice prompted by the mistrusted authorities. Random choice making is another technique. Automated decision making techniques are also available which includes considering the views of all including the stake holders. In group decision making which is definitely applicable in some cases, the aim is to have consensus and in case a minority has other views, then consider those aspects and remove the objections before finalising the decision. In the case of group decisions we can adopt voting based consensus decision-making with plurality wherein decision of the largest block is taken when the exercise fails to reach a majority. This may then be verified by using any of the techniques like range voting, Delphi method, dotmocarcy or decision engineering based on system dynamics. Having identified the complexities created by the overcrowding of information by social media sites available to the decider, one can go in for any of the above mentioned techniques where by the utility of wide information network established by the social media can be optimised and at the same time listed drawbacks of web based technologies in decision making can be subjugated by improved decision making techniques. In the end we say that Social media communication takes two forms: company-to-consumer (in which a company may establish a connection to a consumer, based on its location and provide reviews about locations nearby) and user-generated content. The authenticity of this information is circumspect. Next requirement is the possibility of virtual transposition of verifiability is replaced by authenticity in real time. Judgemental methods are once again likely to play a predominant role in initiation of decision making and execution may be by any of the individual or group methods listed. As a matter of possibility this awareness may make the decider conscious of the pitfalls of relying entirely on social media for decision making.

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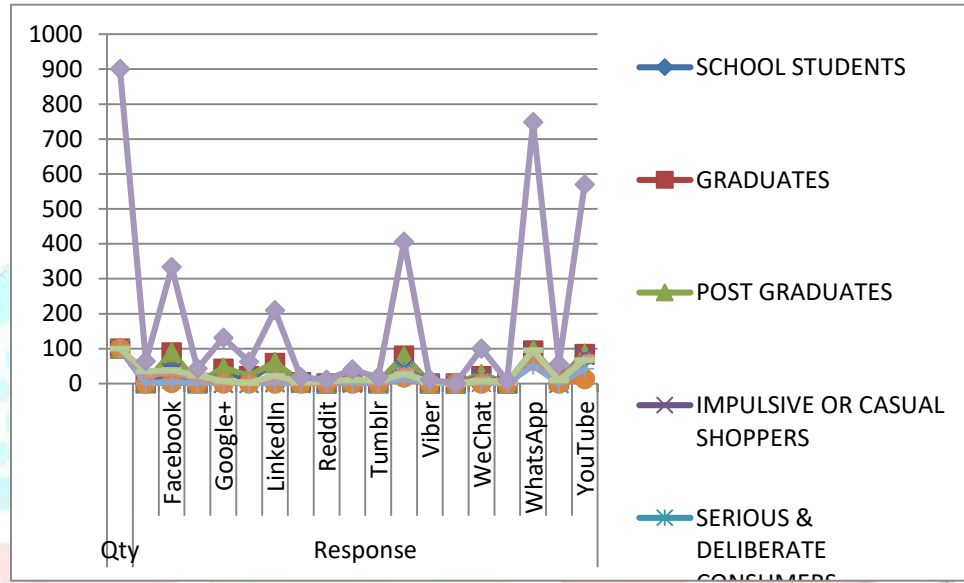
ANNEXURE 1

TABULATED RESPONSE OF POPULATION ON AWARENESS OF VARIOUS SOCIAL MEDIA & PLATFORMS AVAILABLE

SER No	TARGET POPULATION	Qty	Response																	
			Baidu Tieba	Facebook	Gab	Google+	Instagram	LinkedIn	Pinterest	Reddit	Snapchat	Tumblr	Twitter	Viber	VK	WeChat	Weibo	WhatsApp	Wikia	YouTube
1	SCHOOL STUDENTS	100	2	65	3	34	12	56	1	0	4	2	75	3	0	23	1	96	12	76
2	GRADUATES	100	1	89	2	42	21	59	4	0	5	2	80	0	0	21	0	94	13	84
3	POST GRADUATES	100	3	90	0	45	22	61	2	0	6	0	80	0	0	27	0	95	11	85
4	IMPULSIVE OR CASUAL SHOPPERS	100	0	32	0	0	0	4	1	1	3	0	43	1	0	18	0	85	0	81
5	SERIOUS & DELIBERATE CONSUMERS	100	0	12	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	35	0	0	3	0	71	0	47
6	MEDIUM FARMERS	100	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	17	0	0	0	0	65	0	13
7	LARGE FARMERS	100	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	0	0	0	0	52	0	42
8	MIDDLE LEVEL MANAGERS	100	23	32	15	2	5	15	7	3	12	5	35	2	0	13	2	95	11	75
9	HR DEPARTMENTS	100	35	38	23	7	2	23	3	7	10	9	27	5	0	7	5	95	9	67
	TOTAL	900	64	333	43	131	62	210	18	11	40	18	406	11	0	100	8	748	56	570

Source: Telephonic survey: period 2016-2017

CHART SHOWING RESPONSE OF POPULATION ON AWARENESS OF VARIOUS SOCIAL MEDIA & PLATFORMS AVAILABLE

ANNEXURE 2

TABULATED RESPONSE OF POPULATION ON AWARENESS OF VARIOUS SOCIAL MEDIA AS INFORMATION PROVIDERS

SER No	TARGET POPULATION	Qty	Response	
			INFORMATION PROVIDER	DOES NOT PROVIDE INFORMATION
1	SCHOOL STUDENTS	100	90	DNK
2	GRADUATES	100	95	6
3	POST GRADUATES	100	92	2
4	IMPULSIVE OR CASUAL SHOPPERS	100	76	DNK
5	SERIOUS & DELIBERATE CONSUMERS	100	69	DNK
6	MEDIUM FARMERS	100	67	DNK
7	LARGE FARMERS	100	85	DNK
8	MIDDLE LEVEL MANAGERS	100	90	4
9	HR DEPARTMENTS	100	91	1
	TOTAL	900	765	15

Source: Telephonic survey: period 2016-2017

CHART SHOWING RESPONSE OF POPULATION ON AWARENESS OF VARIOUS SOCIAL MEDIA

AS INFORMATION PROVIDERS
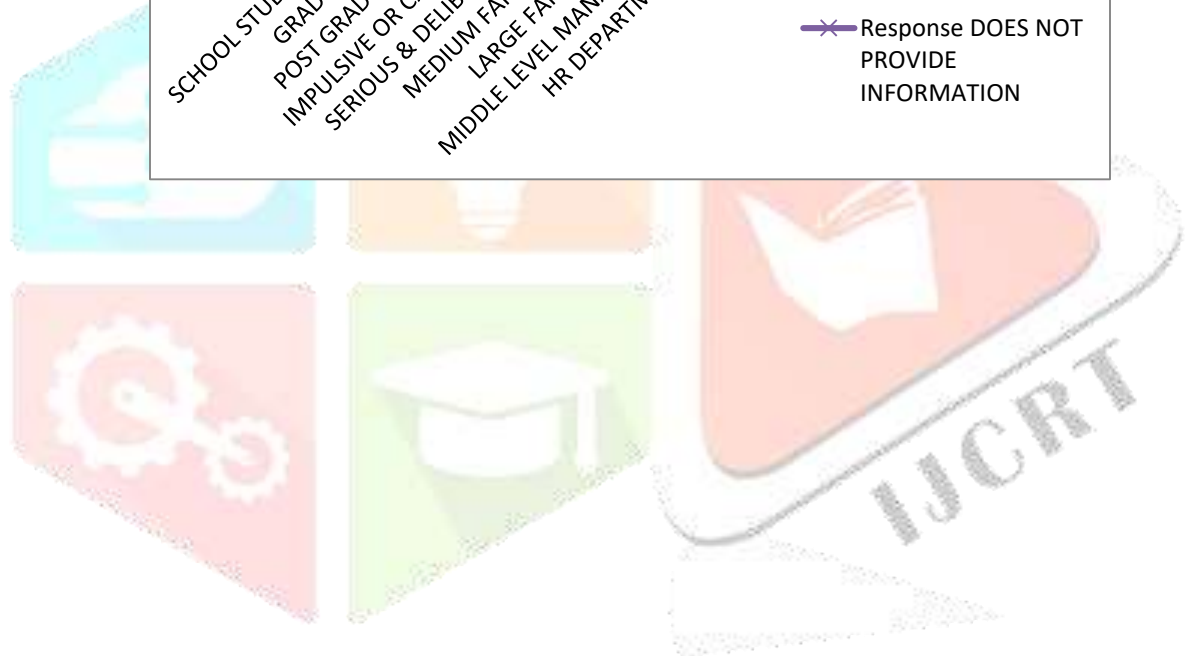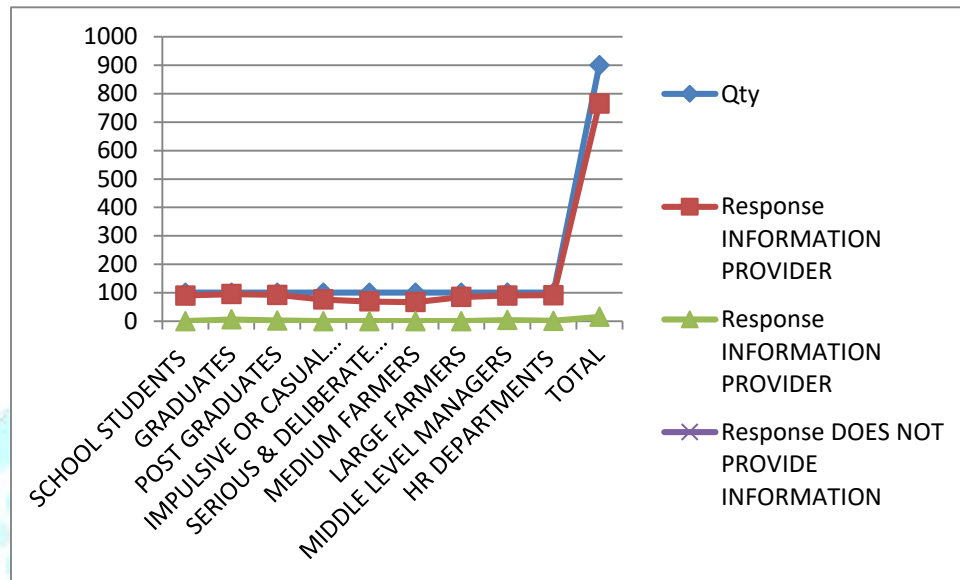
ANNEXURE 3

TABULATED RESPONSE OF POPULATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA CREATING INFORMATION
OVERLOAD RESULTING IN ANALYSIS PARALYSIS

SER No	TARGET POPULATION	QUANTITY	RESPONSE					
			POSITIVELY CONTRIBUTED	INFORMATION OVERLOAD	INFORMATION CLUTTER	UNVERIFIABLE INFORMATION	SCANTY INFORMATION	DO'T KNOW
1	STUDENTS CHOOSING COURSES AFTER MATRICULATION	8	2	3	1	-	-	2
2	STUDENTS FOR HIGHER STUDIES & SPECIALISATION	11	3	5	1	1	-	1
3	STUDENTS LOOKING FOR A CAREER	14	4	6	-	-	2	2
4	CONSUMERS OF FMCG PRODUCTS	10	2	3	3	-	-	2
5	CONSUMERS OF TWO WHEELERS	10	1	6	2	-	-	1
6	FARMERS SEEKING WEATHER FORECAST INFORMATION	18	8	3	2	1	2	2
7	FARMERS FOR PURACHSE OF FARM EQUIPMENT	9	1	4	-	3	-	1
8	MIDDLE LEVEL MANAGERS	18	5	7	-	5	-	1
9	HR DEPARTMENT OF BIGGER FIRMS	12	6	4	-	-	-	2
	TOTAL	110	32	41	9	10	4	14

Source: Telephonic survey: period 2016-2017

CHART SHOWING RESPONSE OF POPULATION ON INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN DECISION MAKING