

## **Developmental Impact of the Use of Social Media in Sri Lanka**

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Public opinion has been the keystone of the theory of modern use of mass media in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and it is especially evident in American behavioural sciences and mass media propaganda. However, with the emergence and proliferation of modern social media, opinion formation has been affected by the liberation of suppressed thoughts and ideas in the marginalized social strata in pluralistic societies. Meanwhile, there is a rapid expansion and circulation of the use of social media among youth and particularly among adolescents. The present study explores the effects of social media in opinion formation in the economic and social context of Sri Lanka. It observes how and for which purposes social media is used in the focused field of study.

Being a qualitative research, a general survey was carried out to identify the use of social media. Textual analysis and case study methods were used for in-depth analysis of the behaviour patterns. Data was collected from a sample of fifty (50) users of social media in order to identify the formation of development opinion.

The results indicate that the majority of social media users are fascinated by the “entertainment-communication” brought about through the exchange of photos, videos and other attractive personal content. However, some cases were identified as “knowledgeable discourses” against existing political and cultural suppressions and restrictions. Empowering the community through awareness can be measured by indicators such as “like”, “share”, “comment” in social media behaviour. In conclusion, this study

suggests that there is a growing trend to empower relevant vulnerable communities via social media.

**Keywords:** social media, developmental impact, economic and social context, community empowerment, awareness