Understand social media

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Technology is neutral. It is neither good nor bad but this depends grossly on its users and their actions or intentions. Social media has come out to be a tremendous by-product of modern age technology however, there certainly are drawbacks as well. What's good is that they can be contained without harming anyone.

Pakistan officially banned TikTok recently, the popular mobile app, because of its widespread use, which was termed as immoral, indecent, and inappropriate to the national social fabric. The move has been condemned, as well as welcomed, by separate groups of people in the country though internationally, it damaged the reputation of the state amongst tech investors.

One can disagree that the app promotes vulgarity but the content at large being produced by its users in the country is unproductive to a great extent. However, that was the case with other renowned social media platforms as well but acceptability came in light of the fact that without such platforms, life is incomplete now.

Donald Trump calls Hillary Clinton smarter than Joe Biden

For instance, YouTube was initially simply considered a waste of time usually by people supporting old-fashion thinking. Same as with other social media platforms which were highly discouraged by people worldwide and Pakistan for spoiling the precious time of the youth and corrupting their mentality. The video-sharing platform faced a three year ban in Pakistan, from 2013 to 2016, because of the proliferation of highly hateful content which hurt the sentiments of millions of Muslims in Pakistan and worldwide.

Now, the platform is helping people transform their lives through a multitude of ways. One can acquire skills from its content, enhance knowledge base, view entertaining videos, and, above all, make plenty of money through content production. There are still lots of issues emerging everyday on this platform but our government does not ban it anymore. What it does is sort out its issues through an understanding with the administration of social media platforms. This is the appropriate way to handle the situation; it becomes a win-win situation for the government, masses and definitely for YouTube which retains user viewership.

France urges Arab countries to stop boycott calls

There are many other social media platforms for networking, micro-blogging and video-sharing that are now contributing significantly to the economy of the country, creating employment opportunities, boosting businesses volumes, and promoting investments. Yet, a significant portion of the content is still unproductive.

Very few content creators in Pakistan could claim that TikTok is the source of their income but we can't rule out that this platform could be potentially productive for its users provided it is used for constructive purposes.

Reportedly, there were rounds of dialogue between the management of the Chinese app and the telecom authority of Pakistan but these efforts failed to produce a conclusive breakthrough. If it had been banned completely, hundreds of users would have shifted to similar apps which have the same use as TikTok. The question that arises now is, how many apps will the government ban on the same note? On the other hand, if companies do not cooperate with the government, they will lose its users to its competitors.

Pakistan reports 707 coronavirus cases in one day

The government should spell out a policy that defines the rules of business for these apps and its users comprehensively. In this regard, educating the masses is the foremost responsibility for the state, not for the purpose of using the app productively but for the improvement of the socio-economic status of the masses at large.

The government could chalk out user guidelines for the population as part of awareness regarding the use of the apps. The 'Dos and Don'ts' should be spelled out clearly so that they are in accordance with the constitution, culture and religious values of the country. Regulations should be rolled out for the apps so that they can help the authorities in controlling the unscrupulous, criminal and anti-social behaviours in society. And last but not least, a speedy system of justice could be set up that would punish users who exploit the social media platform to harm people and society.

In Pakistan, the population of netizens is more than 80 million—it continues to grow every day. The internet is not a luxury and has become a necessity of life to a great extent. It is certainly the right of the government, as the representative of the people, to make decisions for their betterment and prosperity but the authorities concerned should realise that things could be sorted out in an appropriate way rather than through a blanket ban policy. A good and smart strategy for social media is much needed not only for the masses and the companies but for the economy and image of the country as well.