

Social Media and Drug Smuggling in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

Social media is the process where communication and interaction between individuals all over the world takes place. Like all different kinds of technology social media has many advantages but it also has many disadvantages. Saudi Arabia is one of the largest economies and population in the world. The internet users in Saudi Arabia are around 30 million individuals in 2018. This large number of users represents the best choice for market and business not only for legal but also for illegal business-like drug smuggling. In this paper, we try to give some ideas about some drug smuggling cases through social media and the effort of Saudi Arabian Government to control this phenomenon.

Keywords: Social media; Communication; Business; Drug smuggling

Introduction

Social media is increasingly important for organizations and growing user numbers are seen as an opportunity to reach a large number of current and potential users. As social media networks appear to continuously expand in terms of user numbers, the importance for government to understand these implications are likely to increase. Any government may obtain valuable insights from users' posts to those sites, utilize this knowledge to prevent crimes and make decisions, and subsequently improve life by minimizing crimes and guiding young peoples.

Determining a relationship between social media network activity and drug smuggling cases will be useful for anti-drug authorities to understanding the benefits of investing into this form of social media.

The next section introduces the social media background and discusses the link between social media and drug smuggling cases (Section 2). This is followed by the methodology and the results section about drug smuggling cases through social media in Saudi Arabia, where the findings from both actual results are presented and described. In the final section, the results are discussed and research limitations as well as future research areas are addressed.

Literature Review and Basic Concepts

Social media history

According to Merriam-Webster dictionary social media defined as "forms of electronic communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (as videos) [1].

It was suggested that social media started by end of 1800s [2], while some authors suggested that it was started from year 1792 where individuals communicate through telegraph [3]. Telegraph was used to send and receive a messaged using an electrical wire. It has been used due to its speed to deliver long message to the receiver unlike the horses and birds [3].

In 1969 ARPANET was established by Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) in United State [1]. The aim of APRANET was to develop new technology for USA military use during war. ARPANET was basis of the internet and its idea is to allow computers communication. This allows the USA leaders in the government to communicate in case of Soviets attacks the main telephone line and destroyed the telephone system [1]. In the same period CompuServe

technology was developed to enable sharing services but this technology was very expensive for users [2,3].

Home computer has been spread in 1980 with great benefits due to its low coast [4]. Internet birth was Begin on 1997 during this period the first kind of social media was immersed. The first major method of communication developed in 1997 called six degree. This method like Facebook, twitter, LinkedIn allows individuals to create personal profile and add friends [2].

In 2000 internet have been distributed everywhere and many individuals use network for shopping, business, education and more [2]. In 2003 the first social media for medical staff was start "My space" and "link din". It allows people to communicate and to find business opportunity and to post articles in different fields [2].

Facebook and twitter were started on 2005; it allows people to communicate and to share their stories and life activities. Facebook and twitter allow individuals to make profile add people they want to chat with them. Both applications give everyone the ability to look for other individuals profile and give some idea about the habit and the activity for the others. Facebook is one of the largest and popular social media in the world for both businesses and consumers [1]. However, Facebook was not established for business, but recently there are 2.2 billion active users for facebook every month [5]. This gives a successful marketing opportunity for B2B and B2C companies [6].

Now days there are millions of platforms of social media with many kinds' purpose and purposes. Instagram is used to increase the profits for the small business such poor families or the new entrepreneur to increase the size of the business through increase the number of followers where he/she can add some photos for their products. This new method of business is costless and attracting huge numbers of customers not only locally but globally. However, not only legal business is growing through social media but also the black market and illegal business-like drugs of abuse market.

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Received September 27, 2018; Accepted October 16, 2018; Published October 23, 2018

Citation: Alsulimani T (2018) Social Media and Drug Smuggling in Saudi Arabia. J Civil Legal Sci 7: 249. doi: [10.4172/2169-0170.1000249](https://doi.org/10.4172/2169-0170.1000249)

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Instagram is very fast-growing social media with more than 400 million active users per month. B2C companies were successfully used it in 2010. But in B2B businesses the use of Instagram was very limited and challenging for B2B. This is because Instagram is depending on the, mobile applications through using smart phones or tablets [7]. Instagram does not offer its own analytics dashboard, but companies can use other analytical methods such as Google analytics to screen Instagram activity [8].

Social media users in the world

Social media user's increases every year for instance number of users in 2017 to 2018 reach around 2.5 Billion users globally. This number will reach to 3.0 Billion users by 2021 globally [9]. It was found that most important social media platforms for marketers worldwide as of January 2018 were as follow Facebook 67%, LinkedIn 12%, Instagram 10%, twitter 5%, Youtube 4% and Pinterest 2% respectively [10].

Social media and drugs of abuse: According to National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse in USA, 90% of American, use alcohol and drug under age of 18 years. A study by National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, found that teens that use social media were at high risk to use alcohol and other narcotic agents [11]. Social media use can increase the number of drug abusers among teen in addition to smoking, drinking and using illegal and/or prescription drugs [11] According to national center on addiction and substance abuse's study teens who exposed to drugs and alcohol abuse images through social media are three times more likely to abuse alcohol and four times to use marijuana. Teens are generally use Twitter and Snapchat to invite friends to drug and alcohol parties [12,13].

Many researchers found that there is significant correlation between use of social media and drug addiction between teens. It found that posting alcohol related images between teens through social media would enhance their ability for drug addiction [14]. Furthermore, social media use is associated with different illnesses include mental health problems (e.g. depression; sleep disturbance, and eating concerns among teens [15]. Social media used as a tool for selling drugs of abuse among teens. It may be use for drug smuggling through facilitate the communication between buyers and sellers [16]. Advertising for drugs of abuse (DOA) and other illegal substances include medical prescribed drugs usually takes place in parties where images are send through different sites for social media. Due to huge number of teen users for social media, different companies now using these sites and application for advertising for other dangerous products include alcohol and cigarette [17].

Drug related death cases in USA: In United State of America there is one death every 19 minutes due to overdose of painkiller (Opioid painkiller) and the death related to opioid pain killer is higher than those from cocaine and heroin combined [18]. According to National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIH) there are around 72000 death cases related to drugs overdose in USA [19].

Semantic Web and analyzing social media for drugs of abuse

Tim Berners is the founder for World Wide Web and the first one who described semantic Web terminology in 2001 [20]. Semantic Web started by W3C (World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) is an international community where member organizations, a full-time staff, and the public work together to develop Web standards) [21]. The aim of Semantic Web is to define and recognize data on the Web and to reuse these data for special purposes [20]. For example,

if we look for name for some drugs of abuse in Web like heroin the standard HTML search will find all documents include this name but, semantic Web model, will find all documents on the Web and its relationships to data, that would then bring together all information about the drug. This may give an idea that Semantic Web for drugs of abuse in social media will use the entire world related to drugs of abuse and related terminology for example cocaine, heroin, opiate, alcohol, methamphetamine, amphetamine, marijuana, cannabis, etc. It can use other abused prescribed drugs such as Xanax, valium, diazepam, Methadone, lyrica and so on.

There are two technologies for developing the Semantic Web: (i) eXtensible Markup Language (XML) and (ii) Resource Description Framework (RDF). XML allows content creators to label information in a meaningful way [22].

Many researchers use different semantic web platform for epidemiological study for drugs of abuse through social media. A novel semantic web platform called PREDOSE (Prescription Drug abuse Online Surveillance and Epidemiology) which was used for epidemiologic study of prescription and drug abuse follows using social media [23]. PREDOSE uses web forum posts and domain knowledge, modeled in a manually created Drug Abuse Ontology (DAO), to facilitate the extraction of semantic information from User Generated Content (UGC), through combination of lexical, pattern-based and semantics-based techniques [23]. The PREDOSE platform consists of three stages (Figure 1):

- Stage1 : a data collection module,
- Stage 2: an automatic coding module,
- Stage 3: a data analysis and interpretation module.

Another study was investigating the social media of prescription drug abusers on Twitter through analyzing 2100 tweets about prescribed drugs [24]. This study made through study the following hypothesis:

- H1: People discuss prescription drug abuse on Twitter.
- H2: People who discuss prescription drug abuse on Twitter belong to social circles that engage with each other about prescription drug abuse.

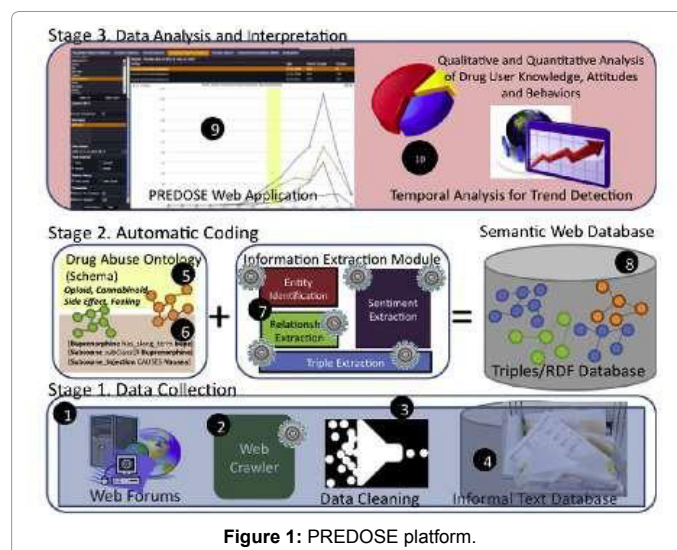


Figure 1: PREDOSE platform.

- H3: Social engagement about prescription drug abuse varies across social circles of those who discuss it, and higher engagement correlates with higher levels of abuse.

Drug Smuggling Cases through Social Media in Saudi Arabia

The current population of Saudi Arabia is 33,546,994. The median age for Saudi citizen is 30.2 years which gives an idea that majority of citizen are young. The active internet users represent 30.25 million. The active social media accounts are 25.0 million. The top active social media platforms were YouTube 23.61, Facebook 21.95 and twitter 17.29 million respectively. The active social chat application was WhatsApp 24.27, Facebook messenger 13.30, snapchat 12.97 and Skype 7.98 million respectively [10].

Like all other part of this world social media can be used for legal or illegal purposes by many individuals. Some people may use these applications for drug of abuse smuggling. However, there were very limited cases reported by the Saudi Arabia Directorate General of Narcotics Control (DGNC) in addition, amount of drugs of abuse were limited in all cases. For example, Saudi Arabia Directorate General of Narcotics Control (DGNC) has arrested eight individuals for drug smuggling through social media. They were running seven Twitter and Snapchat accounts using female identities to trap in young men. The directorate tracked down the accounts and identified the users as Saudi men in their 30s living in different regions of the country [25].

GDNC in Saudi Arabia is not only fighting drug dealers in physical places but it extended to the virtual world. Since the revolution of social networking drug dealers use this technology for drug smuggling due to huge number of young users. The GDNC said that it has the power and ability to deal with e-market for drug of abuse sales. Number of arrests dealers using Snapchat and other modern Smartphone applications were 54 dealers who took advantage of cyberspace to sell their poisons [15].

According to GDNC, arrested individual for drugs smuggling in the end of six months in 2017 were 1628 individuals. The different types of drugs in these cases were 21 million tablets of amphetamine, 19 tons of cannabis, 12 kg pure heroin, 219 kg Cocaine and 23 kg of Methamphetamine [26]. Also, on 2016-2017, the number of arrested cases for drug smuggling through social media in Saudi Arabia was around 162 cases but with very limited amount of drugs. This is because individuals who are using social media for drug smuggling aim to attract women to use drugs and they use social media for advertising for drugs. However, Saudi Arabia government is focusing on cybercrimes and the use of technology to reduce crimes.

Conclusion

Social Media platform is promising but like different technology it can be used to build or to destroy the nations. Saudi Government represented by General Directorate for Narcotics Control (GDNC) are facing this problem by improving the knowledge and professionalism of their workers to control drug smuggling through social media and other method using Internet.

In future we plan to more analyze drug abuse in KSA and we try to give an automatic tool based on the analyzing social media using

artificial intelligence to facilitate the epidemiologic study of prescription and related drug abuse practices.

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