

IS SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES A CATALYST TO SOCIALIZATION?

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Abstract

Social media plays a vital role in transforming the way people communicate with each other. In a world dominated by technology and many individuals possessing an innate need for continuous streams of information, social networking effectively fulfills the desire for both the ability to send and receive responses instantly. This study is an attempt to find the users of Social Networking Sites, the common Social Networking Sites used by people, the numbers of hours spend on these Social Networking Sites, the reasons for the use of Social Networking Sites and the risks involved in using Social Networking Sites. The sample for the study involved 200 people of different age groups. It involved students from junior college, young working adults, people working in corporate, housewives, and retired people.

INTRODUCTION

Social media plays a vital role in transforming the way people communicate with each other. In a world dominated by technology and many individuals possessing an innate need for continuous streams of information, social networking effectively fulfills the desire for both the ability to send and receive responses instantly. While people may still interact with one another in more 'traditional ways' such as visiting homes or phone calls, many people today are updated to learn or receive the latest news about one another through FaceBook rather than from a personal inform. How many people learn about the happenings of family and friends online? Even of those who live nearby? Is this a negative evolution? Perhaps, but in some ways the ability to globally socialize can be a positive.

Socialization is the process of inheriting norms, customs, and ideologies. Social networking is a way to use computer networks to achieve the objectives of socialization. Social networking can be viewed in two senses: in the sense of interacting socially and undergoing socialization at sites throughout the Internet, or interacting socially, and undergoing socialization in the real world. Social networking has an impact on socialization, for better or worse:

Less Phone Calls: While many people are becoming attached and dependent upon their cell phones, this has more increasingly evolved from calling to communicating through text messaging. Today much communication takes place via electronic text and a high percentage likely occurs through social networks.

Decreased Face to Face Interaction: People spend an unreasonable amount of time on social network sites. However in an age where time often feels to be at a premium, many people are likely to connect with friends and family on social networks rather than spend time socializing in person.

Less One on One Interaction: Social networks are rooted in the philosophy of shared information. A message sent by a person can be disseminated to a number of people in a fraction of a second. Face Book and Twitter are two of the most current popular networks that offers a way of sending out a singular message where it can be streamed to all connections.

Can Social networking be the silver lining for the cloud of socialization: Social networking sites offer people new and varied ways to communicate via the internet either through their PC or their mobile phone. The great strength of social networking is the multiple ways the users can interact. Below is a list of the main communication resources used to build social networks: chat; messaging; wiki; email; video; voice; chat; file sharing; blogging; discussion groups. Few highlights linking social networking towards socialization:

More Information Shared: Expanding on familiar knowledge and learning new information becomes predominant. The larger the network, more the information being spread. In this respect people are exposed to many different lives and obtain a keen insight as to how others live and what they are thinking, both near and far.

Diversity: Through social networks people who never would have had the opportunity to interact can share thoughts, knowledge and ideas. The diversity of people and their perspectives to socialize locally in a global network becomes easier.

PC at home: Home internet penetration has increased and also the connection speed, this helps in an increasing access to home internet facilitates for the use of social networking sites.

Increasing ICT confidence: There are an increasing number of people who have basic computer and internet skills and the confidence to use them. These people are much more likely to take to new online communication technology such as social networking sites.

User-friendly programmes: In the past, setting up one's own blog or webpage involved a relatively sophisticated knowledge of computer programming. While this has changed over the years, social networking sites have developed a system that, at its most basic, simply involves filling in the gaps or using drop-down boxes.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

In view of these aspects the researcher probed into the finer arenas of Social Networking Sites (SNS) in daily use. The sample for the study involved 200 people of different age groups. It involved students from junior college, young working adults, people working in Corporate, housewives, and retired people.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To find the users of Social Networking Sites.
 2. To find out the common Social Networking Sites used by people.
 3. To find the numbers of hours spend on these Social Networking Sites.
 4. To find out the reasons for the use of Social Networking Sites.
 5. To find out the risks involved in using Social Networking Sites.
1. It was indeed necessary to know the spectrum of users of these SNS to understand at length the finer aspects of social networking sites towards socialization. Hence the age group and number of users in each sector were analyzed.

Age Limit	No. of Users
15 – 25	48
25 - 35	44
35 – 45	43
45 – 60	37
Above 60	28
Total	200

2. It was observed that adolescents and young working community had made SNS as a hub for their interpersonal relationships and this formed their means of socialization. The middle age group focused on SNS mainly for their professional socialization and build networking. It was more on status promotion and value addition that they emphasized on. For the retired group of people, it was more on being in the social group, being updated and to be at par with the techno- Gen group. Connecting with old friends and also updating themselves with their kids who were a part of these SNS. The most common SNS used were Face Book, Twitter, Linked In, Yahoo, Skype, Orkut.
3. At this stage it was necessary to find out the numbers of hours people spend on the SNS, this would give us an idea to what extent SNS has pepped into our lives and also will be able to highlight the addictive nature of people towards SNS.

No. of hours spend on SNS in a week	No. of people
0 – 5 hours	43
6- 15	122
16 – 25	18
26 – 35	11
36 – 45	4
More than 45 hours	2

The prime aspect that caught in the eyes of the researcher was the hours spend on these SNS. Though SNS has become daily routine, but it has yet to become an addiction. It was seen that maximum number of hours spend by most of the people were between 6 – 15 hours which ranges approx around 2 hrs a day. This was felt quite acceptable considering the boom of SNS in our country. Any individual would spend around 3-4 hrs in a day for recreation, but the alarm would be if this number increased.

4. People visiting the SNS may have various reasons behind it, it was imperative to find out the reasons for the same to understand their intentions in spending time on the SNS.

Reasons on SNS	No. of people
Stay in touch with friends	200
Share photo, video other work	186
Find more about people you know or you do not know	189
Communicate with classmates about content related topics	89
Plan or invite people to events	21
Participate in special interest groups	56
Make new friends with people whom we have never met	121
As a forum to express opinions and views	89
For professional activities	52
Response to advertisement	12

This finding was indeed of prime importance for the researcher with respect to SNS, it peeped into the fact of using SNS. The purposes were many but the most striking was that SNS were mainly to stay in touch with friends and to know more about people whom we know and do not know.

5. With every positive opinions there possess likely threats and fear towards SNS. Few risks factors that evolved from the people were

Risks faced by people	No. of people
Security problems (virus affected files)	79
Misuse of information	114
Leaving a history that could cause problems in future	67
Cyber bullying	42
Restricting access to SNS	52

With surety there is no guarantee for security, we may become slaves of these SNS, but there is also a fear of the same with respect to the enormous amount of new virus arrivals affecting our hardware and software. Quite often the profile put up may not match to reality, undisclosed facts or distorted information affects the credentials of the individuals, personal bias and hatred are often reflected in several posts and comments, poking and un-friending also becomes very obvious, cyber bullying also is witnessed. Such information leaves a history which affects personally in future at marriage alliances, jobs and family relationships. Restricting the access to SNS has also become a common aspect in many firms.

CONCLUSION

The research analysis gives a base for further research in each of its areas towards SNS. Social networking could really help to discover new ways to communicate knowledge by moving the focus toward a more and more ubiquitous learning developed by community interactions. Building one's social network is an ongoing process. The value of social networking sites is clear, both as an entertainment tool and also as a way of creating and giving oneself identity which is very vital in socialization.

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