

Social Media Paradox: An Exploration on the Bright and Dark Sides of Social Media

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores a discourse about the bright and dark sides of social media, which is rooted from various studies. It offers also a reflection about the topic. The paper uses literature review as a research methodology to make sense of the data gathered. In conclusion, social media is not beneficial nor malevolent; it is neither neutral. It is only a medium of whatever one wants to convey. Therefore, the bright and dark sides of social media can be traced upon on how a specific individual uses the platform. It just becomes beneficial or untoward depending on the users themselves. Factors, such as, but not limited to, intention, caution, usage, and self-control, contribute to outcome—positive or negative in nature.

Keyword: social media; social networking sites; users; digital technologies; Facebook

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1. INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly digitized geopolitical scene, social media has become an integral aspect of practically everyone's life. They are used for a variety of purposes, the most common of which being interaction and entertainment. For many individuals, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter form a vital part of social media. The sites have grown in popularity and prominence among people of all ages, genders, and races, with hundreds of millions of members. According to a recent research, the reach of social networks encompasses much of the globe and includes more than simply Facebook, Twitter, blogs, YouTube, and Flickr (Solis, as cited in Dickey & Lewis, 2010).

A succinct definition of social media emphasizes the technology that underpins it—social media is a series of Internet-based apps that expand on the conceptual and technological roots of Web 2.0, and that enable the production and sharing of user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). As a result, in this context, this refers to an upgraded version of an original Web.

Corollary to this, Web 2.0 is concerned with a platform in which information and applications are no longer developed and published by people, but are instead continually amended by all users in a participatory and collaborative manner (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Some define social media as platforms where users may build a site with personal information to communicate with friends both literally and online, allowing them to find individuals with similar interests (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011). According to this techno-biological description, social media helps individuals network and communicate information, which may either develop or destroy connections.

In its broadest sense, social networking sites can be defined as: Web-based services that enable individuals to (1) create a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) formulate a list of other users with whom they communicate, and (3) view and navigate their list of linkages as well as those made by others within the system. The structure and terminology of these relationships may differ from one location to the next (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

Similarly, the social media ecosystem is all of the social networks—user produced content, blogs, audio, video, music, news, photographs, and tweets—collaborating with digital technology (Safko & Brake, 2009). According to this, the heart of a social networking site is comprised of individualized user profiles (Trusov, Bucklin, & Pauwels, 2009).

Social media has a definitive history that began in the 1970s (Monica, 2016). ARPANET (Advanced Research Projects Agency Network) was the first to go live. It was one of the world's first functional packet - switched networks, and the forerunner to what would become the worldwide Internet (Fouad, 2018). Users of the fledgling Internet created tiny, tightly-knit communities of particularly trained users (Kiehne, 2004). As a result, ARPANET heralded in the first social media.

Furthermore, social media is now ubiquitous and widely used around the world. According to one study, social media is a crucial motivation for consumers to get online (Global System for Mobile Communications, 2015). Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Tumblr, and Instagram are some well-known examples. In recent years, participation in online social networks has grown at an exponential rate (Acquisti & Gross, 2006). The systemic and dynamic aspects of social media would appear to stimulate continuing dialogues between their writers and their users, making them more dialogic in nature than standard Web sites, according to Seltzer and Mitrook (in Dickey & Lewis, 2010). Everything appears to be available and interconnected through social media.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a literature review as research approach to make sense of the data acquired. Because literature reviews integrate previous research efforts (Evans & Kowanko, 2000), they are increasingly being employed to handle the accumulation of information associated with social media. Because reviews, rather than original research, are increasingly utilized as the foundation for many choices, it is critical that they be carried out (Evans & Kowanko, 2000). This is intended to assist readers in shedding light on the positive and negative aspects of social networking sites.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section is thematically divided, *a priori*, into two parts: (1) the bright side of social media; and (2) the dark side of social media.

The bright side of social media

Social media, the internet network that connects individuals all over the world, is a blessing for the modern world, and it has now become an unavoidable aspect of society (Aishwarya & Vinod, 2017). It has spun itself in communities to the point that it appears that removing it will impede the flow or exchanges of communication.

Furthermore, the transition from traditional forms of media to a scheme of horizontal communication networks structured around the Internet and wireless communication has initiated a multitude of communication patterns at the root of a foundational cultural change, as virtuality becomes an important principle of our reality (Castells, 2010). As a consequence, social media helps to the progress of culture, which is essential in communities. It has become crucial to our feeling of life in a social world in a psychological sense (Couldry, 2012). It must be acknowledged that media has become a part of our lives and has an impact on them.

According to Seltzer and Mitroo (2007), the architectural and communicative features of social media would appear to nurture active conversations between their authors and their readers, making them more dialogic in nature than traditional Web sites, and thus provide greater relationship-building potential. According to this idea, relationships with individuals may be developed further through social media. Furthermore, it made it possible for an individual to interact with hundreds or even lots of other people about products or companies that provide them (Mangold & Faulds, 2009), so people would no longer must go physically in a shop or a specific place to converse, buy materials, and solicit feedback about the company that provides them.

Indeed, the rise and adoption of online social networks has ushered in a new era of cooperation and communication (Cheung, Chiu, & Lee, 2011). Social media does, in fact, bridge the gap between and among numerous locations. Long-distance communication is now feasible because to social media.

Furthermore, social media affects employee satisfaction in the public sector (Khan, Swar, and Lee, 2014); serves as a source of information for travelers (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010); reinforces civic engagement (de Ziga, Jung, & Valenzuela, 2012); increases buyer-seller relationships (Sashi, 2012); boosts social capital (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007); and innovates organizations (Tsai, 2001).

The dark side of social media

On the other hand, social media may have a detrimental impact. For example, social media platforms strengthen social networks while eroding individual relationships (Bala, as cited in Aishwarya & Vinod, 2017). This is supported by Booth's study (as described in Keller, 2013), which found that people are becoming more sociable and engaging with others, but the form of that communication has changed so that individuals are not meeting face-to-face as frequently as they are accustomed to.

This assumption implies that individuals expanded their engagement, albeit in a mediated manner. As a consequence, social media is eroding personal and offline relationships. According to Berlinger (as cited in Chasombat, 2014), virtual life experiences can cause hallucinations to the value of human interaction as a necessity for bodily, psychological, and social wellbeing.

Furthermore, youths regard social media as a cause of mood and anxiety disorders for certain adolescents, a platform for cyberbullying, and a source of addiction (O'Reilly, Dogra, Whiteman, Hughes, Eruyar, & Reilly, 2018). Social media use has resulted in negative results for the individual user, such as an increase in despair and loneliness, as well as neglect of existing close relationships, according to the study (Kraut, as cited in Newham, 2012). As a result, social media promotes unpleasant feelings, which might lead to disease or disorder.

The immersive structure and content features of social media, such as the strong peer presence and exchange of a plethora of visual images, imply that social media, working through negative social evaluations, transportation, and peer socially constructed processes, can strongly impact body image issues (Perloff, 2014). As a result, social media encourages negative social appraisal, which can lead to people feeling inferior to themselves. This hostile judgment gained via social media enabled people to act violently, even at the price of their health, such as the dread of gaining weight. In summary, social media persuades individuals to look flawless at any costs.

Besides, a group of researchers discovered that there is a statistically significant negative association between students' time spent on social networking sites and their school success (Paul, Baker, & Cochran, 2012). As a result of the inverse correlation, social media has a detrimental impact on students' academic performance; this is because social networking sites function as a diversion for them. Students also exhibit addicted behavior in which they use social media even in classes, causing disruption for other students and concentration challenges in them (Çolak, 2014).

Students' obsessive behavior on social networking sites certainly puts them at a disservice. Students might struggle to concentrate in class and may experience sleep deprivation. According to a research, particularly in comparison to those who rarely monitor social media before bed, those who most frequently check before bed were around 1.5 times more likely to have more disrupted sleep (Levenson, Shensa, Sidani, Colditz, & Primack, 2017).

Facebook, according to Vaidhyanathan (2018), is a machine that would disperse propaganda to huge numbers of people, distract them from crucial matters, stimulate hatred and bigotry, weaken social trust, subvert respectable journalism, encourage doubts about science, and participate in massive surveillance all at the same time. This is supported by Allcott and Gentzkow (2017)'s study, which found that people are considerably more inclined to trust reports on social media, especially if they have ideologically separated social media networks. People's prejudice and narrow-mindedness are exacerbated by social media, which can lead to violence. These tensions are worsened by social media fake news.

4. CONCLUSION

Social media has intertwined itself in the social context. It has become institutionalized in the society, entered lives of most people, and changed human interactions and connections. Without a doubt, it has

radically transformed the world. It offers several advantages, majorly it aids people to communicate and to get updated. However, it also provides disadvantages such as distraction and addiction.

Social media indeed is paradoxical. To concretize, an example of which must be given. Social media makes one isolated tending to focus all day long scrolling his newsfeed; he becomes mentally absent in the actual social context, since he is too absorbed on the parcels of information that interest him. On the other hand, one may utilize social media to become more connected to his friends, especially to those who are far from the actual social setting. Social media, in this case, acts as an instrument to bridge him between and among people. It makes people both isolated in a physical sense and connected in a digital context, at the same time.

In reality, social media is not beneficial nor malevolent; it is neither neutral. It is only a medium of whatever one wants to convey. Therefore, the bright and dark sides of social media can be traced upon on how a specific individual uses the platform. It just becomes beneficial or untoward depending on the user himself. Factors, such as, but not limited to, intention, caution, usage, and self-control, contribute to outcome—positive or negative. Indeed, the human intervention dictates and provides color on the effects one may receive on the consumption of social media.

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