

Social Media and Society: An analysis

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Abstract

This paper examines the impact of social media on human behaviors and social relations. Today it is crucial to determine that social media is way of positive social relation. Social media not affecting social relation but psychological and moral character also. Rapid uses of developed techniques indicates that social media is attractive medium for all but negative also. Based on secondary resources this paper will clarify a relationship with human behavior and socio-psychological aspect of society.

. “Social Media is a group of Internet based applications that build on the ideological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content” (Kaplan & Haenlein :2010). “Traditionally, consumers used the Internet to simply expend content: they read it, they watched it, and they used it to buy products and services. Increasingly, however, consumers are utilizing platforms – such as content sharing sites, blogs, social networking, and wikis” (Kietzmann:2011). With this description there is a clear distinction to the classical media like print or broadcasting where the user is more a passive consumer. With the term Web 2.0, developed by Tim O’Reilly during a brainstorming session at a conference in October 2004 (O’Reilly: 2005) .The user has moved from the consumer to the prosumer - a professional consumer. Another important change in information search is the shift from the push to the pull principle (being active in searching the relevant information) (Boundless:2014).

New information technologies and social media, changing behavior in the use of technology and increasing demands of the information seekers bring new ways of exchanges not only on a two-way, symmetric communication process, but on a many to many exchange process. Historically, political parties, organizations or companies were able to control the information about themselves through strategically placed press announcements and good public relations managers. “Today, however, firms have been increasingly relegated to the

sidelines as mere observers, having neither the knowledge nor the chance to alter publicly posted comments provides by their customers” (Kaplan & Haenlein: 2010).

Another aspect involves the era of corporate web pages and e-commerce which started with the launch of Amazon and eBay in 1995 (Kaplan & Haenlein:2010). Since then global communication takes place also on the level of e-shopping, e-booking and e-payment. Huge data are transferred and safed in seconds worldwide to unknown servers. This affects the human being and the society as a whole also on another field: The Internet safety or online safety. In a world where the data flow is controlled by external servers, data theft and data protection are the new buzz words.

How is it possible to maximize the user’s personal safety and how to protect data on a global level from computer crime like malicious software? As the number of Internet users and exchange of User Generated Content increases daily worldwide, Internet safety is a growing concern for children, adults, organizations and even countries. This could even lead to identity theft on a local or global level. Events like ‘Safer Internet Day’ (safer internet:2014) should help to raise awareness on the individual level. More and more internet sites are created by governments or agencies to make citizens aware about these new threats of the personal identity and loose of personal data (Getsafe online:2014). One of the most important achievements of the “globalization from below” (Kellner & Clayton: 2007) or direct virtual participation lies in the democratization and participation process as an important tool to use against oppressors, major corporations and corruption.

It is occurring locally, but spreading quickly on a global level via social media (Butts: 2012). Taking the examples of the Arabic Spring countries like Syria and Egypt and now in India (Rai:2013)“social media and networking tools have been one of the most effective tools to direct political elections and social changes”. The idea of a democratic Internet platform in a globalized world allows anyone to have a voice and to be heard as long as the user has some way to be connected to the Internet (Butts:2012, Rai:2011). “The democratization of technology like Twitter is fundamentally changing the way people interact with one another, as well as with local opinion leaders, small businesses, and mass

media” (Cha et al: 2012). The following numbers give an idea about important facts and figures around the global Internet environment (IWS: 2019). In 2019, over 4.38 billion people were Internet users, which correspond to 56.8% of the world’s population. North America is the region with the highest Internet penetration rate in the world (89.4%), followed by the Europe (86.8) Oceania/Australia (68.4) Latin America/Caribbean (67.5) Middle East (67.2) Asia (51.8) In Africa (37.3)

Only few years ago, the www was invented and Facebook went online. Taking into consideration this short time frame, it is impressive to see how this development affected our daily life and behavior. How important is to have access to the Internet with the right technology. Taking the example of Facebook as the largest online social network this web based services allow individuals to “(1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (Boyd & Ellison: 2008). In Asia (37.2%) Latin America/Carib.(18.8 %)Europe (17.4%)North America (13.3 %)Africa(8.0%),Middle East (4.4%) Oceania/Australia(1.0%) were facebook subscribers in the world by regions.(IWS: 2017).

The frequency of communication via Social Media is continuously increasing.. Facebook statistics offer an inside view about the behaviour of the youth in the Internet on a worldwide basis . We are producing information locally and distributing it globally, almost in real time. This ‘global village’ is a revolutionary change in how we proceed information. “It is interactive; it is communal, and it is global” .The anonymity of online-networks facilitates to take liberties with the truth and to misbehave without consequences. In social media one cannot trust the identity of people. Lies, deception and cybercrime testify to that. In the field of scientific work for example individual mental contribution, often checked in essays, is required. Anonymity here causes a serious problem, since on special websites students are able to download, to buy and even to commission such essays. The web offers the possibility to fake individual mental effort, even though software to combat plagiarism is available but is only partly

successful. Anonymity furthermore leads to misbehavior because of missing social control.

One of this, well known especially to young people, is cyber-mobbing or bullying. “Cyber bullying is any behavior performed through electronic or digital media by individuals or groups that repeatedly communicates hostile or aggressive messages intended to inflict harm or discomfort on others”. One in five cannot exclude becoming potentially a bully oneself and almost one-tenth declare that they once have already been a cyber-mobbing offender. (Cyber mobbing: 2011). People seem to be more open to peer pressure within social networks. Online-networks provide a platform for social comparison and envy. A study by Krasnova et al. (2013) in understanding envy dynamics on social networking sites in general and Facebook in particular showed that envy feelings are common on Facebook.

Social online-networks can influence self-control, which is an important mechanism for maintaining social order and well-being. Research demonstrates that because people present a positive self-view to others on social networks, it momentarily increases the self-esteem in users who are focused on close friends. This leads them to display less self-control after browsing a social network compared to not browsing a social network. Greater use is associated with poor self-control in a number of important domains (i.e. health, mental persistence and spending/finance). Thus social network use may have a detrimental effect on well-being by leading certain people to exhibit lower self-control. “Given the ubiquity of online social networks, their ability to lower users’ self-control could have widespread impact. This may be particularly true for the current generation of adolescents and young adults who are the heaviest users of social networks.”

Social media has an impact on human brain and human identity. “The mind is the personalization of the brain, a set of neuronal connection peculiar to each individual, driven in turn by that person’s particular experience and interaction with the outside world” neurophysiologist Greenfield (2008) suggests. Due to the malleability of brains humans’ forte is the ability to learn and to adapt since we are sensitive to outside influences. The ability of brains to make connections shifts human from a purely sensory world into one with a personalized cognitive context one might call identity. Greenfield stresses that

the outside world i.e. the influence of new technologies might be changing especially young people in ways that could be problematic for their identity. Given the plasticity of the human brain and the heavy use of social information technology among children what kind of effects might have living in two dimensions (i.e. real life versus virtual life) on our children`s brains? The strongly visual, literal world of the screen and the continued interaction with a fast-paced, multimedia environment might predispose brains to shorter attention spans and might even be related to the rise in cases of ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder). Considering the results of the various studies new research demonstrate interesting correlations between the use of social media and the effects on individuals and society. But due to the fact that there are a number of influencing factors, which lead to extremely high complexity, we still understand little about the causalities and the role for example individual behavior (e.g. intensity of social media use, passive / active use, focusing on strong / weak ties etc.) users´ age and their ability to reflect own behavior, personality traits . Furthermore it is needed to be taken into account if a person already has social contacts in real life (i.e. in-person friends) as opposed to just communicate with virtual social contacts (i.e. online friends). All this might lead to differences in effects on individuals and subsequently on society.

In lieu of conclusion we can explain that Social Media is widely used and boon and bane at the same time. It facilitates global communication in seconds, connects deserted areas with the civilization, plays an important role in e-society and e-culture and above all in the participation and democratization process. But the list of disadvantages and threats is also long.

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