

SOCIAL NETWORKING-A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD

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ABSTRACT

Social Networking is the buzzword of recent times. It is a double edged sword, since the benefits get people hooked on to it and then too much dependence might lead to psychological problems. The opinion is divided- since the supporters of bright side of social networking believe that if any psychic manifestations take place, the reason might be an already existing mental problem whereas those against it, believe that the excessive use of the Social networking leads to mental ailments. The paper tries to present a balanced view of the same, discussing the opinions of experts in the field, analysing the data and deriving conclusion.

Keywords -Social Networking, Social Media, Facebook, Selfies, Whatsapp

I. INTRODUCTION

The essence of social interactions has changed over the last few years. It simply meant meeting friends and families over lunch, dinner, tea or just spending sometime with them. Over the years, it has become synonymous with interacting online with all, with the aid of social media. Sharing life with each other through facebook, twitter, whatsapp etc is being preferred now. "Geography is history" now, the friends and family, living at distant places are able to constantly stay in touch easily, being aware of all that is happening in each others life.

Social networking implies sharing of information for social interaction with family and friends. It is used extensively by businesses to inform, educate and engage customers or its users. The sharing of information is the basic human need and to do that with the ease of online mediums has made it very popular. The reason for its rise are aplenty. The need to stay connected and informed about each other's life and whats going on in the world around them. Paucity of time, to go and meet-up with friends has been sorted out through the Social Networking medium. Nuclear families, with both parents working also creates the problem of "loneliness" amongst kids, which they try and take care of by connecting to a lot of friends through the SN websites.

II. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The article is aimed to analyze Social Networking from various perspectives, this qualitative research aims to find out

1. The relevance of Social Networking in marketing the products/people/causes

2. To analyze theoretically the various evils associated with Social Networking with special reference to Facebook and whatsapp

To understand the essence of Social Networking, a lot of literature has been studied and prevailing trends analyzed, to critically evaluate the positive and negative role of Social Networking. Informal conversations with students and other affected people were also initiated to analyze the same.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The study of the literature related to the Social Networking showed that though the research in this area is in its infancy but many researchers are studying the various aspects of it. The negative aspects have been studied in detail by psychologists and reported.

Samrita Ghosh in her article , “Beware! Social media addiction can cause FOMO”, shares that FOMO i.e. ‘Fear of Missing out’ keeps people hooked on to the Social Media. A clinical psychologist shares that absence of social media can lead to FOMO. One tends to develop uneasiness if staying away from social media is for too long.

Idris Mootee in his article, How to avoid the Facebook /Twitter Addiction Disorder(FTAD) Pandemic?” says that Social Media Addiction Disorder is becoming a real problem, it is a psychophysiological disorder involving tolerance; withdrawal symptoms; affective disturbances; and interruption of social relationships. The most common one is Facebook /Twitter Addiction Disorder (FTAD).

Emma Stein in her article , “Is Social Media Dependence A Mental Health Issue?” discussed the finding of the leaders opinion on “Status updates” pattern, trends and what do they signify? It concludes that in moderation, its great but when used excessively it has negative impact on the quality of life being led.

Casey , Ferrand in her article “Signs of suffering from 'selfie' addiction”, shares that selfies have become a cultural phenomena and most of the celebrities are promoting its use. Though some are caught up in the addiction of it, being obsessed with it. She also shares a set of statements that may help in figuring out whether someone is suffering from selfie addiction or is borderline case of the same. The article shares the opinion of various doctors. One of them said that the patients want surgery done to improve their chances of looking better in the selfies. He also opines that, "Too many selfies indicate a self obsession and a certain level of insecurity that most teenagers have. It just makes it worse. Now they can see themselves in 100 images a day on Facebook and Instagram." In the article titled , 'Selfie Addiction' Is No Laughing Matter” from The Huffington Post , the psychiatrists say selfies may become an addiction for people with some form of psychological ailment like Body Dismorphic Disorder, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, etc.. As opposed to the belief that selfies cause psychological problems, it said that addiction happens in those who are already suffering from it.

Sverre Ole Dronen in the paper titled, “New Research about Facebook Addiction” the study has clear views as to why some people develop Facebook dependency. It occurs more regularly among younger than older users.

It also found that people who are anxious and socially insecure use Facebook more than those with lower scores on those traits, probably because those who are anxious find it easier to communicate via social media than face-

to-face. People who are organised and more ambitious tend to be less at risk from Facebook addiction. They will often use social media as an integral part of work and networking.

– the research also indicates that women are more at risk of developing Facebook addiction, probably due to the social nature of Facebook

IV. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The detailed study of the literature available on area has resulted in dividing the findings and conclusions which revolves around the use of Social Media as a constructive tool and also sometimes causing addiction resulting in an unhealthy way of life.

4.1. Social Media as a Tool of Marketing

4.2 Social Media-The evil side

4.2.1 Whatsapp

4.2.2 Facebook

4.1 Social Media as a Marketing tool

Social Media channels have added new dimensions to the field of business and marketing. There are certain aspects of the customers or users that have to be considered whenever a decision regarding setting aside resources of time and money have to be taken..

Social Media as a tool for marketing would serve well for the organisation whose customers or end users are comfortable online and spend substantial time on the internet based activities. Marketing through the channel of Social Media is considered a cost-effective way of reaching the customers.

Though cost-effective as compared to the other mediums, it still requires a detailed planning to frame the strategy to cater to different social medias, viz. facebook, twitter, instagram, linkedin and so on. No single strategy would work for all the users and for all the platforms. The platforms and the users are ever-changing and also there are no blue-prints to follow , since the medium and its discovery as a marketing channel is comparatively new.

The strategy should be to assign an expert in the particular Social Media to use only that media for a particular period of time or for a particular event. The objective is not only to generate interest (“likes” on Facebook) but also to keep the interest alive, so that it manifests into profits for the organisation.

The strategy to address users/ customers through social media should not be a “on-and-off” one, but a constant one, which needs to be adaptive of new changes in technology , medium or propagation of a new medium. A strategy should be finalised which should be economical and is able to yield desired result.

The most economical and at times the most dangerous is the “Word-of-mouth” (WOM). The speed with which the word spreads is confusing at times. “WOM” can work for and against the company, so due care needs to be exercised. The online travel industry has been thriving well, even during the rock bottom years of e-commerce.

The online travel customers rely heavily on the recommendations of the other customers. One good or bad experience with one customer of the hotel/resort can have a ripple effect and hence the result. According to Nielsen report, 92% of consumers believe recommendations from friends and family over all forms of

advertising. The good experiences can result in multiplication of customers and a bad one can deplete the existing base of customers also.

In addition to the “word of mouth” , the capability of precise targeting of the customers is driving people to invest in marketing through Social Media. The successful ventures of Gillette India, Vaseline, Philips India, on Facebook are a few of the success stories. The highlights of all, being the one-to-one marketing or advertising. Twitter is also being used as an extensive tool of marketing for marketing of people, events and causes. Since Lok sabha Polls 2014, Narendra Modi has been using twitter to convey what he would do and also what he has been doing since he came to power. The Indian citizens wanted communication and this is what they have been provided with, through social media interactions.

Movies and Events are being rooted heavily through twitter. PK for the first time used audio as a part of twitter promotions. When Bang-Bang was to be released Hrithik Roshan, the star of the film, created and invited his friends from Bollywood for the Bang-Bang challenge, hence promoting and marketing their film.

Important events like Delhi Elections, are being promoted through Social Media. People taking to Facebook to upload their dotted index finger , encouraging people to go out and vote. Chief Ministerial candidates promoting the importance of voting by taking to twitter and requesting all to go out and vote.

Recently the cause of Raif Badawi is a Saudi Arabian writer and activist is being manifested online for gathering online support worldwide. Aseem Trivedi has started a series of cartoons dedicated to the activist, requesting people to support and stop his lashing.

The positives of using Social Media are aplenty and are being used by businesses and people to their advantage.

4.2 Social Media-The flip side

The connectivity provided by Social Media provides so many benefits and that are being reaped by Social Media giants and by the users. But there’s something gloomy about it, beyond the glitters. The charm of connecting to the family, friends (real or only online friends), celebrities is far beyond the human mind can fathom and handle. Even the excessive use is seem as normal by the users, but is it?

There are reasons specified by various experts have been numerous, some of them are enlisted and discussed below.

- a. Self distraction
- b. Boredom relief
- c. Re-enforcements in the form of supportive comments and ‘Likes’ make them come back repeatedly
- d. (Dr.Shannon M Raunch, University of Mesa.)
- e. Self-demonstration “ME”
- f. Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)

Social networking provides people with a platform for self demonstration and human psyche gives extreme importance to “Me”i.e. themselves. A medium where everyone is flaunting their possessions, relations and themselves. It also provides a distraction from the work or task at hand and we all can avail it sometime or the other. Another important reason has been relief from boredom. The feature of “Likes” on Facebook and retweets on twitter, gives users a high and make them come back again and again. Lately, the term “FOMO” has been

given an important status, where users live in constant fear that they will be missing out on something if they are not logged on or using the Social Networking platform. As a result, they keep logged on and hooked on.

It stirs a variety of emotions including elation on receiving positive comments; feeling rejected with negative comments; unrest and inadequacy when we are comparing ourselves with friends and family and so on. Anxiety UK, conducted a survey on Social Media use and shared their findings -53% of the participants said SM sites changed their behavior and 51% of those said there was a negative impact, they claimed their lives have been *worsened. They now feel less confident and more disturbed when they see the happening lives of their friends.*

Also, Dr. Bernard studied and found out that The drug and alcohol use has shown an increasing trend of use by excessive users of SM. They confess that when they see the “happening lives” of their friends and family, through the exposure of pictures of drug and alcohol use, they are more inclined to use it themselves. Since everything online being shared is glamorised.

Each platform has its own charm and whims, which need to be analyzed, separately. For the purview of this article, we will study the platform of whatsapp and Facebook, also touching upon the new obsession with Selfies.

4.2.1 Whatsapp

Whatsapp has become an obsession with the people with smartphones. A simple application developed makes it possible to have a conversation with anyone, anytime and least cost. It aids in sharing pictures, videos, jokes, etc. The phenomena is relatively new but has taken over the life of all with an internet connection and smart phone.

There are innumerable instances where excessive use of whatsapp has been creating problems.

In Indore, India a software engineer filed a case of divorce against his wife, accusing her of not giving their life anytime, since her world is limited to WhatsApp messaging service. A similar case in Yemen where a wife filed a case against her husband over spending most of time using Whatsapp. Another unique one, A Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Services officer is facing disciplinary action after two inmates escaped from Chikurubi Maximum Security Prison while he was glued to social networking platform WhatsApp.

There are a few signs that can be helpful in figuring out whether someone is addicted to Whatsapp use or not.

- a. Urge to check is too much.
- b. Thinking about whats on whatsapp before going to sleep and early morning
- c. Checking ‘last online’ of friends
- d. Changing your status and display picture very often
- e. If you continuously check your phone
- f. If you keep forwarding the jokes, msgs, without verification and without getting response from people
- g. If you pick up fights with people who don’t respond immediately to your conversations

De-addiction

If some or all of these feature in anybody's daily life, the problem of addiction exists and needs to be taken care of. There are certain suggestions that aid in de-addiction from whatsapp.

The basic and first step to be taken is to remove the whatsapp icon from the home screen, fight the urge to open whatsapp the moment there's a new message; instant reply to new chats is uncalled for; do not forward anything and everything; frequent updating profile photos should be avoided; change of status should be restricted to once a week and the time frame to check whatsapp (whether it be one hour or two hours), etc.

Protocol

There is an upsurge of groups on whatsapp- name it and we have it. Work group, friends group, parents group, etc. Since the concept is new, so in this article we create an discuss a protocol to be followed in different groups.

– Professional Group

- DOs Only Information (only useful)

- DONTs
 - No Good Morning messages
 - No jokes
 - Do not use your discretion on whats important and whats not
 - Very imp: when Information shared-should it be followed by “Thank you” NO

There are various things that need to be followed stringently, especially in the Professional groups formed on whatsapp. The basic reason is that it is a forum formed by professional colleagues , so problems cant be pin-pointed openly. The Dos section is simple one liner, only useful information pertaining to the work needs to be shared on the platform. Whats not to be shared requires a lot of thought i.e. Donts. Good Morning messages are a strict “No”. Jokes, spiritual, motivational messages are also not meant for the professional group. It is important not to use your discretion in judging what is important and what isn't. Another very important dilemma is that if some information is shared and you are thankful for that information. Do we all say “Thank you”? the answer is definitely “No”. It is assumed that you are Thankful. Also, if some information about someone's achievement is shared, Do we all start congratulating the person in the group? The answer is again “No”. But in this case, the protocol is to congratulate the person on his personal whatsapp account and not on the group.

• Protocol for Group-Dos and Donts

– Friends Group

- DOS
 - Share whatever you want to

- The DONTs
 - Do not contribute to rumour

– Check with news websites

» Bomb hoax

» Fire

» death

The Protocol for Group of friends is simple. Anything can be shared since as opposed to professional group, friends would tell you upfront what they want or don't want you to share. The Dots list is small as well, Do not become a means of spreading rumours, check with a news website or channel before you forward a message about a fire anywhere, death of a celebrity, bomb hoax, etc.

The excessive use can also cause injury to the wrist, referred to as whittling. The technology is supposed to be helpful and it is but it is addictive and the addiction to anything isn't good.

4.2.2 FAD-Facebook Addiction Disorder

Facebook is only 11 years old and has taken over the world by storm, by becoming an integral part of staying connected with friends and family. Each event of personal life is shared with hundreds of online friends within an instant and the need to stay connected is satisfied. The positives are a plenty but Facebook Addiction Disorder (FAD) has surfaced and is hitting the generation hard, so there's a need to know that

- a. it exists
- b. there are traceable symptoms
- c. There is a possibility of de-addiction there is a pattern of excessive use being observed by psychologists, parents and friends.

The research by Boston University's Ashwini Nadkarni and Stefan G. Hofmann propose that the social network meets two primary human needs—the need to belong and the need for self-presentation. The instant connection with people, at any hour of the day provides a false sense of security to people, the messages that get is exciting since it feels like someone is interested in “me”. “Me” being the crux of whole social networking—myself, my family, my house, my car, my holiday, etc. The urge of appreciation and belongingness is fulfilled by Facebook. At the same time, when the comments get negative, there's a problem of feeling rejected and bullied at the same time.

As per Joanna Lipari, a clinical psychologist at University of California, LA, Eleanor Shaw (2013) in the article “Status update : Facebook Addiction Disorder”, the following symptoms explain if the problem is serious.

1. Losing sleep over FB. Staying logged in throughout the night and eventually getting too tired for the next day;
2. As a benchmark, spending one hour or more on FB is too much;
3. Being obsessed with exes who reconnect on FB;
4. Ignoring work for FB;
5. The thought of getting off FB leaving the user in cold sweat;

Also if the user has more online friends than real life friendships, checks facebook more than 5 times a day, updates status too frequently, spends hours updating the status, checks facebook account the first thing in the morning and clicks pictures not for a memory but to post on Facebook

All these are detrimental to the health-both physical and mental. Clicking of pictures, especially selfies have known to be a symptom of narcissism or body dimorphic disorder. Pictures are clicked mostly with the intention of posting online rather than to create and cherish those as memories. Hours are spent on updating the status, with the sole interest of getting comments and “likes” from online friends. Online friends almost always out-number the real-life friends and in some cases many online friends are not even known to the person. To overcome boredom or to distract themselves they log on to the Facebook but end up ignoring their work.

the addiction interrupts their day-to-day activities; many teenagers are using FB to express themselves and some getting depressed since their real life didn't match their “FB persona” leading to depression and even suicidal tendencies. The couples cited it as one of the major cause of their break-up.

The University of Michigan addressed this issue in a study published in August of 2013 that observed the relationship between FB use and Well-being. By studying the participants five times a day over two weeks about how they felt after using Facebook and how satisfied they were with their lives after the two-week period. Their study found that Facebook negatively impacted them with each variable. The more people used Facebook "the worse they felt" and "the more their life satisfaction levels declined over time. the question again arises that If Facebook makes us feel worse, why can't we stop ourselves from going back for more?

The answer to this is provided by another research conducted by Harvard University's Psychology Department The reason we can't keep our thumbs away from updating, liking, and hashtagging was explored in this study that found that there is a biological reward that happens when people disclose information about themselves.

- "Self-disclosure was strongly associated with increased activation in brain regions that form the mesolimbic dopamine system," the study reported.
- Rewards were magnified when participants knew that their thoughts would be communicated to another person.

De-addiction

- Know that you are addicted
- Start questioning why you are on FB?
- “Likes” on FB, do they mean something?
- Keep track of time spent on FB
- Ask family and real life friends how they feel about the amount of time you spend on FB
- Be careful of race to have as many friends as possible
- Stop updating the status frequently
- Keep “FB Free day” once a week
- Try giving up FB for a particular event
- Turn off email notification
- Remove FB application from your mobile phone

It starts with honest confessions to self, about why we are using Facebook excessively and what do “likes” imply for me. Removing the facebook app from the smart phone and having a FB free day and event can go a long way in determining the addiction level and also help in de-addiction.

To conclude, Social Networking is an intriguing field of operation and research. Researcher are divided on whether its positives outweigh the negatives or vice-versa. The medium cannot be blamed for all the evils. Sometimes it may be a pre-existing problems like Body Dismorphic Disorder, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, which is blown out-of-proportion when SN is used excessively. The article concludes that though there’s no denying the fact that if used judiciously, SN can help achieve a lot but if it takes over our life and the dependence is too much, its time to back off. If the addiction is allowed to propagate, the consequences are grave and hence it should only be used as a way and not the way of life.

“The path treaded on Social Networking
looks greener and younger;
But the terrain will get tougher
if not reined in sooner”

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