

Essay

Social Media and Current Society

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SUMMARY

The paper discusses the increasing importance of social media in our lives. It emphasizes the human dependency on social media. By the start of this millennium, social media began to gain popularity as it was seen connecting people over continents and reducing distances simultaneously. The paper highlights the importance of social media in the daily lives of people all around the world. Social media has helped, grow awareness in different aspects of life. Social media has made life easier as people get to know the facts in the shortest time. As of today, the social media and people, both are intertwined and cannot be separated. This connection is interdependent and the best part is that it has proven to be the strongest one too. In the 21st century, it will not be wrong to say that social media plays a major role in the education of the upcoming generations. ■

KEYWORDS Social media; Communication; Technology; Society; Population

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Technology is advancing at an ever increasing pace and social media technologies has transformed and revolutionized the communication environment created by the internet. Since the advent of social networking sites in 2002, social media has gained immense popularity and is now an integral part of the lives of many people. Social media technology is defined as “web-based and mobile applications that allow individuals and organizations to create, engage, and share new user-generated or existing content, in digital environments through multi-way communication”. It is often assumed that social media only includes the content shared on social networking sites like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and Twitter. However it includes a range of internet-based tools and platforms which not only enable its users to increase the quantity of information shared but also enhance that experience of sharing information. These platforms serve as an interactive medium allowing content sharing and community based input. These mediums has an array of web technologies like video presentation platforms such as Skype, Google Hangouts, blog networks such as Tumblr, Medium and WordPress, forums, social networking, social bookmarking and wikis etc. Hence, as the scope of social media has widened its user base has also increased dramatically. With these changes the way social media is used has also changed dynamically. Social media initially emerged as a platform for people to interact with friends and family but has now been adopted by businesses and educational institutes that want to reap the benefits of this fast of communication and connectivity to accomplish their goals. This shows that Social media is not only used for entertainment purposes and in today’s world of connected learning enabled by social media its impact in the field of education cannot be ignored

ANALYSIS OF CURRENT SOCIAL MEDIA

One way in which social media has positively transformed the education is by increasing the accessibility to education. Such e-learning platforms provide easy and free access to resources online to help them learn. Hence, social media serves as one of the best means for self-regulated study. Social media has transformed the way information is delivered and received by enabling distance learning. There are various video presentation platforms have allowed instructions to be delivered across great distances. However, the most prominent

form of e-learning is the Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) which has greatly changed the learning experience for many as a profound as instructors can teach and students can gain education without being in the same room. MOOCs were referred as the integration of the connectivity of social networking, the facilitation of an acknowledged expert in a field of study, and a collection of freely accessible online resources. Platforms like these have helped individual to widen the horizon of their knowledge in various fields of education by creating and maintaining a network of people that can be utilized to contribute to advance knowledge or address deficiency. Another important tool of education enabled by social media is learning management systems which aids in both distance and campus based learning. Learning Management System can be defined as a platform where different tools are integrated in a single system which offers all necessary tools to run and manage an e-learning course. Learning Management Systems offers an array of services which help students to plan, learn and execute easily and efficiently. These include discussion forums, file sharing, management of assignments, lesson plans, syllabus, and chat, etc. Desire2Learn, WebCT, Moodle, and Blackboard are amongst the popular LMS today which enable easy integration with social media services. All these technologies by integrating social media with education have helped enrich the learning experience, improve participation and reduce dropout rate.

Social media as it is known for its immense contribution in the realms of social interaction serve as a powerful tool for increasing communication between teachers and students beyond the school premises easily by sharing information on applications like Twitter, Facebook or LinkedIn to provide quick help to the students and providing customized feedback to students and for tutorials. Online discussion forums have seen to increase student participation and have enhanced communication between instructors and students. Social media has also contributed towards increasing collaboration amongst students by providing easy opportunities for interaction. It facilitates group members working on projects. As tudents can create Facebook groups or use the Twitter hashtags for the communication and sharing of ideas. Although, this can be done through other mediums such as email, but social media makes the conversations open and allows even the instructor to view threads to check if everyone on the team is contributing to the discussion. Moreover, social media is the best

means to keep everyone up-to-date about the latest news and trends, allowing them to know any event as soon as it happens. Hence, keep their knowledge up-to-date. Furthermore, social networking technologies are designed to enable students to pick and choose the group, activity or the person they would want to follow for daily updates. Hence social media does not only widen the ways of learning but also increase the base of people whom students can learn from.

The benefits derived from social media depend on the way it is utilized. Yes, social media plays an integral role in enhancing learning and communication however its unchecked use for long periods of time can distract students from learning. Research has shown that about two-third of the students use electronic media to access social media sites during class or while doing homework. This multitasking invariably increases distraction which earlier research has shown to disrupt the learning process by diverting attention and reducing the students' performance. Furthermore, these social media websites like Facebook, twitter is one way through which students procrastinate during studying making them less productive. A study in Ohio State University revealed that college students who use Facebook spend less time on studying and hence have lower grades compared to those students who do not use Facebook. Another hazard of social media is cyberbullying which is increasingly becoming a major problem of users of social networking sites. Approximately 39 percent of teenagers are reported to be cyberbullied in some way on social media as compared to 22 percent of online teenagers who do not use any social networking sites. Bullying like cyberbullying has shown to have adverse impact on learning as findings of British National Child Development Study (NCDS) revealed that bullying reduces knowledge attainment and human capital accumulation. Another problem is that handling and keeping up with so much information resulting from information overload with so many web blogs and twitter accounts to follow. With this plethora of information another problem emerges of discerning the fake from authentic sources. False news and information can cause serious problems in the long run. As advances take place in the domain of social media and people become more trained the filtering of irrelevant information and discerning false news will become easier. To solution to major issues like cyberbullying and addiction of social network-

ing sites includes spreading awareness and educating users of social media in schools and by parents.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The sporadic growth of social media in a very short span of time has reshaped the way people work and interact. Therefore, it has become an inseparable part of both people's private and public lives. In the 21st century where this world had become a global village, the effects of social media on various institutions especially education cannot be overlooked. As social media sites grow in popularity, they have become a vital part of a student's educational success. They not only influences of the educational attainment of the students but also their behaviors at schools and colleges. Although social media is widely criticized for being a mere distraction for students of all ages and educational level, it must be acknowledged that it assists in educational success through increasing collaboration and distanced form of learning. Nowadays, students have great interest in social media websites and are thus spending considerable hours on them which is a matter of concern for not only their parents but also their teachers. The findings of a study revealed that almost two-thirds of students reported using social media in class and when studying and doing homework. Multitasking like this results in increased distraction, narrower focus and a shorter time span all of which can be detrimental to a student's academic success. However, social media websites can be utilized by the youth positively for their academic assistance and support. They offer opportunities for students to collaborate and connect with each other by being easily accessible. They provide a virtual space for students to research, discover and to get a deeper understanding of their areas of interest through distanced learning schemes which provides them with individualized attention, customization and flexibility by freeing them from barriers of time and space. It also strengthens students' online communication skills and knowledge. It has been shown in various studies that students who are reluctant to speak in class feel comfortable in participating in online discussion blogs and writing. Therefore it can be concluded that despite being a source of disturbance, social media has enhanced collaboration and connectivity through distanced forms of learning and hence revolutionized education like never before.■

ARTICLE INFORMATION

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