Growth and Future of Social Media

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Abstract— **Last 4 years – from 2010 till 2013 – has been an eventful period for social media. Several new networking sites became popular (WhatsApp, Google Plus, Instagram), the usage base grew by leaps and bounds, and Facebook bought over some of its competition. The growth of social media along with the rapid growth of smart phone usage has also made a great impact on various facets of our lives. This period also saw a great amount of surveys being conducted on the growth of SNS, how people and companies use them, and what are the impacts caused by this media. In this paper, we present and analyze the survey results, and the impact it has caused on the businesses and society at large. We also focus on some of the specific segments of the society while analyzing the impact. Further, we also have discussed the future of social networking, how the benefits can be utilized for the betterment of the community, including education field, and also the importance of taking necessary care so as to avoid the serious negative impacts of SNS.**

Index Terms— **Education, Future, Impact, Marketing, Social Media, Society, Youth**

I. INTRODUCTION

Social networking phenomenon has emerged over the past ten years. In that time, social networking sites (SNS) have grown from a niche to a mass online activity. The participation is huge, where in which, tens of millions of internet users are engaged, mostly in their leisure time, and sometimes at work. However, there has been very little research on the socio-economic impact of these sites especially in the Indian context. In this paper we have focused on the impact of these social networking sites on the society, especially Indian, in both positive as well as negative perspectives. Social networking has existed since human inhabitations began, since, humans always sought to live in social environments. The growth in size of spread and size of social networking sites (SNS) is affecting how modern societies manage their social networks. Social networking has moved on to the internet to a large extent. There are various factors which have prompted us to consider the implications of these technologies on the society. The major point is the the willingness of users to embrace SNS as a means of communication and social networking in everyday life. Increasing Dependence on technology for basic communication is another major point which makes this analysis very important. Sites like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn are influencing the way users establish, maintain and grow a range of social relationships, from close friendships to casual acquaintances. This growing impact also makes it

important that we look into the future and see how these social media are going to change the way we socialize, and how such an ecosystem can be utilized for a better living, and be well aware of its negative impact and be prepared for handling the challenges.

A brief look at what social networking sites are used in different parts of the world – starting with the biggies, American-based services such as Facebook, Google+, Tumblr and Twitter are used worldwide, and Nexopia is used in Canada.[1]

The others are, Badoo, Bebo, VKontakte, Delphi (online service) (also called Delphi Forums), Draugiem.lv (in Latvia), Hi5, Hyves (in The Netherlands), iWiW (in Hungary), Nasza-Klasa, Soup (in Poland), Glocals in Switzerland, Skyrock, The Sphere, StudiVZ (mostly in Germany), Tagged, Tuenti (mostly in Spain), and XING in parts of Europe; Hi5 and Orkut are used in South America and Central America; Mxit in Africa; and Cyworld, Mixi, Orkut, renren, weibo and Wretch in Asia and the Pacific Islands.

To avoid the need to re-enter friends and interests on multiple SNS, there are some standards being developed, like the FOAF standard and the Open Source Initiative. These are not yet widely adopted, and as things stand today, one needs to re-enter the details on every other SNS.

II. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

Digital Insights has provided a snapshot of the recent predominant trends in social networking. Facebook is ahead of everyone else by a huge margin. Twitter and Google + are at second place at almost identical user base. Instagram has posted impressive user growth and activity.

Total users:

- Facebook - 1.15 Billion
- Twitter - 500M
- Google Plus - 500M
- LinkedIn - 238M
- Instagram - 130M
- Pinterest - 70M

Here are some very surprising social media statistics if you have social media for your business. These might make you rethink your strategies for your business.

A. Mobile only users on Facebook

Facebook has over one billion users, and approximately 200 million are mobile only. In other words, nearly a fifth of Facebook's user-base doesn't own a PC, and access the website only through smartphones. This makes mobile market very important. Thus, companies and software vendors need to provide smartphone applications to cater to the mobile world, and thus attract a large customer base. E-Commerce is led by iOS, while there is a massive market for Android as well. There is a growing base for Windows Phones, and many enterprise users are on Blackberry.

Millions of Facebook users who access it from mobile generates 30% of Facebook's add revenue as well. This is a 7% increase from the end of 2012 already.

B. YouTube's growing popularity

YouTube reaches more adults than any cable network. In the United States, YouTube's viewers have exceeded the number of television viewers. Online consumption of video is rising rapidly, while viewers of televised content are on a decline. Several companies, especially movie production houses, release their marketing video campaigns on the internet. This has worked favorably for many companies, since online promotion costs significantly lesser than television advertising. Internet advertising is of tremendous help for small companies and even individuals, since they can quickly setup marketing campaigns at a fraction of the cost that is needed for television campaigns.

C. Difference in popularity of social media networks

Active user-base of social media networks shows tremendous variation. More than 95% of Facebook users log into their account every day. This drops to 60% for Twitter, and 30% for LinkedIn. This greatly determines the route that media advertisers will target for their campaigns, in order to optimize costs.

D. Two new members join LinkedIn every second

LinkedIn - the social network for professionals - continues to grow every second. It has groups and blogs to job listings, which makes this platform a rich source of information and conversation for professionals who want to connect to others in their industry. There are HR companies utilizing this for hiring activities. These contacts are used for B2B marketing as well.

E. Children on Facebook

There are about 5 million Facebook users under the age of ten. It shows that young children have easy access to social media. This is a potential demographic which is waiting to be tapped by social media marketers. Discount offers and prizes can be targeted at this young demographic, using the social media. In these cases, utilizing social media becomes more effective than other conventional media like television or radio. Brand loyalty is yet to be formed for the young crowd, and the marketers are targeting young children with their brands and promotions.

F. International users of Facebook

Users of social media are not just in the United States. The user base of Facebook is about three times the population of The United States. Three times the population of The United States are the user base of Facebook. This indicates the extent of globalization that is happening in the internet age. Thus, social media can help companies to expand their reach and involvement in international markets very effectively. Today, internet is easily available in most parts of the world. The social media marketers who can directly reach out to their customers through internet is trying to tap the new markets. For example, marketers from the western world can potentially target eastern markets, and vice versa.

G. The fastest growing demographic on Twitter: Age Bracket: 55–64 years

- This demographic has grown by over 79% since 2012.

- **The fastest growing demographic is the 45–54 year age bracket on Facebook and Google+.**

- On Facebook, this group has grown 46%.

- For Google+, the growth is 56%.

Pretty clear that the idea of social media is just for youngsters is right out though the window. It will pay rich dividends to include these age brackets into your marketing target demographic.

H. Social Media is the #1 activity on the web

Social media is tremendously popular. This is the most common thing that people do online. Social media carries more weight than ever. It continues to grow as a habit, and new platforms continue to appear and develop.

I. Social Media for Business Marketing

A whopping 93% of marketers use social media for their business. That means there are lots of people involving and managing the social media strategy. In the recent times, social media is being included more frequently as part of the overall marketing budget and strategy.

J. 25% of Facebook users don't bother with privacy settings

There has been a lot of news about social media companies and privacy. Facebook has been in the news several times over

privacy issues. Instagram users were recently put into confusion over changes in their terms of service, and the recent NSA news reports that people are more conscious of their privacy online.

On one side, these cases of security-conscious users are pushing back against social networks and web services, and on the other side, Velocity Digital reports that 25% of Facebook users don't care about their privacy settings.

K. SNS usage growth story

- Daily active users are over 728 million during September 2013. DAUs has increased by 25% year-over-year.

- There are over 1.2 billion monthly active users (MAUs). MAUs has increased by 18% year-over-year.

- Monthly active mobile users (MAUs) are over 870 million as of September 2013. Mobile MAUs has increased by 45% year-over-year.

- Mobile DAUs were 507 million on average for September 2013.

III.   COMPARATIVE STUDY

A. Growth of Facebook

In Q3 2012, Facebook passed 1 billion monthly active users and 600 million monthly active mobile users. By Q3 2013, Facebook passed 1.15 billion monthly active users, 819 million mobile users, and 699 million daily users.

Facebook's mobile user segment has grown phenomenally from 40% of total user base in 2011, to 70% now, and expected to be at 80% by 2014.

As we do every quarter, let's now take a look at this growth in graph form.

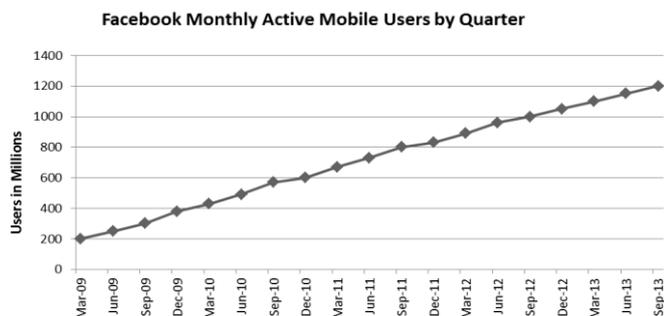Fig.1 is Facebook's growth for total active users:

Fig.1

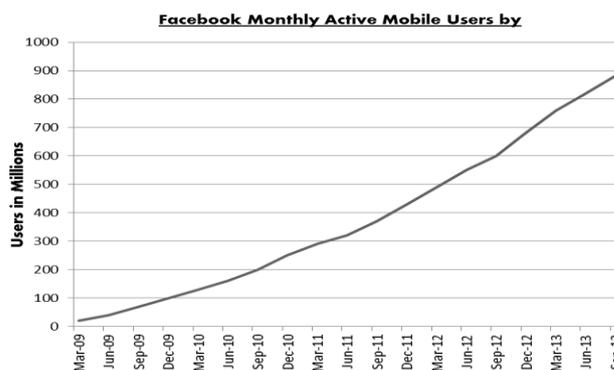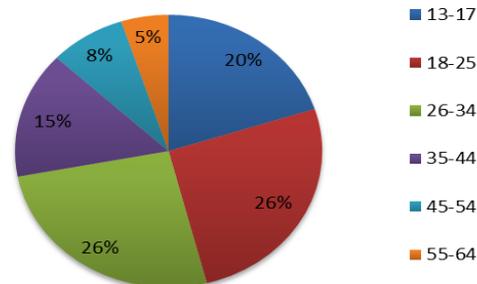Fig.2 is Facebook's growth for monthly mobile active users:

Fig:2

In January 2013, these were the top countries with the most Facebook users.

- United States had 170 million registered users

- Brazil had over 64 million users

- India had over 62 million users

- Indonesia had 51 million users

- Mexico had 40 million users

B. Challenges for Facebook

Facebook is facing a problem of users under 35 years gradually moving to other platforms. This was announced by Facebook's chief financial officer David Ebersman, at a conference of financial analysts. This is not yet a significant problem for Facebook, since it is so large.

Amidst the perception of a few people that the platform is outdated, the company is trying to remain interesting with new apps and features. This helps in maintaining the user base in terms of size.

But youngsters want a separate network for each function – for eg., Instagram for photo sharing, chat via WhatsApp etc. WhatsApp has already taken over part of Facebook's role in terms of chat.

The above case is a potential threat for Facebook. Though the number of users can decline over time, a dedicated core of users remain. Also, if the competition becomes

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threatening, Facebook has a history of buying it out like in the case of Instagram.

One reason why the youngsters are moving away from Facebook, is that they find it "uncool" when their parents and teachers join the network, and hence impacting their freedom.

Another reason is that the privacy settings are very complicated, and few people know who can see the things they post.

Further, the network has become quite youth-unfriendly, since Facebook now only shows selected posts. Earlier, all their friends' news was shown.

Due to the above reasons, Facebook has lost about 1.2 million users in the first quarter of 2013, as per research firm Social bakers estimates.

C. The Real Data on Facebook vs. Google+ (And Other Social Networks)

Google + has been compared with other Facebook to great detail. Recent, third-party information on this topic Pew Research, Gigya, ComScore, and indicate that Google+ is a long way from competing with Twitter and Facebook (and also, Pinterest and Tumblr) for time, attention and engagement. A summary and analysis of the data is given below:
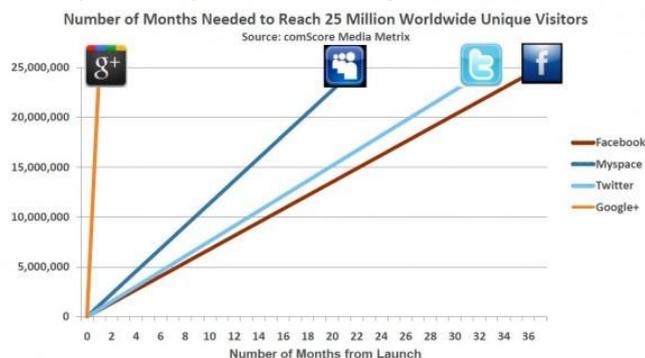
Though dubbed as FB killer, G+'s near-vertical growth came through just adding G+ into its current user base, while FB and Twitter works hard for every new user.

Since Google has merged Gmail, search and other parts of its platform, the claimed growth can't be a apple-to-apple comparison with other networks. The reported size numbers are based on number of account holders, not on activity or usage.

There is a feeling that it is becoming more difficult to sell on services for Facebook, which is relatively mature now. Even with the fact that people employed in social media appear looking for a change and shake up, the data indicates Facebook's continued domination of the social networking space.

Some of the statistics from various studies on G+ usage is given below:

- GlobalWebIndex claims mfore than a quarter of consumers use G+.
- Pew Research Center id not include G+ in the report of US social media usage, since they found that consumers were unable to distinguish G+ from other Google Services.
- Gigya reports that people using its sharing widget share on Facebook 50% of the time, on Twitter 24% and on Google+ a lowly 2%.
- Pinterest has 1200% more shares than G+
- As per Dartmouth's annual report, of the 2013 Fortune 500, 77% have corporate Twitter accounts, 70% are on Facebook and just 35% have an active Google+ account. In addition, another 19% have inactive G+ accounts, and the report says, "This is the only platform studied where there were a significant number of open, but inactive accounts." (sic)

The above fact does not exclude G+ from marketing campaigns. Marketers should evaluate *their* audiences and make smart decisions about where to engage. Also, G+ will be an important tool in improving company's search engine relevance.

IV. SOCIAL IMPACT OF SNS

A. Benefits of SNS

The major benefits are below:
Speedy Communication: In the current scenarios of busy schedules, and stretched timings, social networking sites offer to communicate in a speedy and efficient manner. Twitter takes just about 20 seconds and with cross-posting option over other social networks switched on, that update reaches everyone you want it to reach (and probably more besides) in an instant.
Be in Touch: SNS opens up the world. One can communicate easily and effectively, not just with close friends and family, but pretty much anyone in the world. Everyone is equal, irrespective of location. You can get in touch with friends you haven't met since school, and everyone can be kept up-to-date on the happenings.
Location based services such as Foursquare enables to know about your friends in the close vicinity without having to do anything. Social networking sites have made the world a smaller place.
Building Relationships: SNS can put you in touch with people with common ideas, thoughts and interests. These can be starting points for a long lasting relationship.

B. Attitude and Behaviour towards SNS

SNS users can be classified into various groups based on the behaviour while using them. These are as follows:
- Alpha Socializers – A small number of people using sites in short burts for flirting, or meeting new people and to be entertained.

- Attention Seekers – Some people who want attention and comments from others, often by posting photos, and profile customization.
- Followers – Many people joins SNS to keep up with their peers.
- Faithfuls – Several people used SNS to rekindle old relationships from school or colleges.
- Functionals – Some people who used the sites for a very specific purpose (eg. Publicize a product or service)

Non-users are also classified based on their reasons for not using social media.

- Concerned about safety – people concerned about safety online, in particular, about making personal details available online.
- Technically inexperienced – some people who lacked confidence in using the internet and computers.
- Intellectual rejecters – people who have no interest in social networking sites and see them as a waste of time.

C. Social Impact of SNS on Children

Social Networks and Childhood Obesity

It has been found that, especially in western countries, body mass index (BMI) among children and adolescents, is associated with clusters of school-based friendship. School friends appear to be significantly similar in terms of their BMI. The similarity increases with BMI, with friends of the highest BMI appearing to be most similar. The similarity extends to frequency of fast food consumption clusters within groups of boys; and body image concerns, dieting, and eating disorders among girls. The situation is same is true for tobacco use, where peer pressure stimulates initiation of smoking.

More research is needed to clarify whether these associations are due to induction / influence of peers, or due to environmental factors.

Overweight youth are more probable to be socially isolated and marginalized. Social networks may also affect their body image. Further, adolescents tend to underestimate their own weight status when surrounded by obese peers.

Social networks therefore may have a critical role in shaping young people's eating habits and body weight and vice versa, and their role suggests the potential of social network–based health promotion interventions.

D. Social Impact of SNS on Teens

Negative Impact of SNS on Youth of India

The main disadvantages of social networking are the following:
- ➢ Youth spend a lot of time on these sites. Many times, the time spent is not productive in any way, and is essentially wasted.
- ➢ Many are worried that non-friends may see personal information.
- ➢ There is a growing concern that information posted may be used against them. There have been a few

incidents in India where individuals were booked for just airing their views.

E. Ethical Responsibility of Youth Using SNS

Social networking sites are frontiers that present youth with opportunities. This is also fraught with a great amount of risk, particularly for young people. Young people are participating in a range of activities, including networking, blogging, gaming, instant messaging, and downloading music, uploading and sharing their own innovative creations, and trying to collaborate with others in various ways.

Five key issues are at stake in the new social networking media, viz., identity, ownership, privacy, authorship, credibility, and participation. These issues decide the social and ethical responsibilities of the youth that using the services of social networking sites.

- ➢ Every SNS user should be aware about their rights and moral responsibilities.
- ➢ Everyone should respect the authentication and privacy of other members
- ➢ We should follow the ethics of online identity.
- ➢ Create culture of disclosure.
- ➢ Everyone should control the presentation of their identities and manage their privacy. Most SNS provide privacy settings to control access to one's private information.
- ➢ The online culture of disclosure empowers themselves and others, creates communities of support around shared struggles, and also develops a broad ethical sense of responsibility on individual privacy.
- ➢ Maintain credibility. This will enable the youth to play an important role to reduce the negative impact and utilize the advantages of social networking sites in a beneficial way.

F. Social Impact of SNS on Adults

There are five major worries that employers have in regard to social networking.
- ➢ Perceived loss in staff productivity
- ➢ Data leakage (Loss of IP, other critical information) from staff
- ➢ Damage to company's reputation
- ➢ Threats from cyber-crooks
- ➢ Additional load on company servers, and increased internet bandwidth usage
- ➢ Potential cause for internal harassment issues

There are negatives from the employee standpoint as well. A working professional could be contacted by the boss to take up an assignment, when the individual was online to check a friend's status. Such prolonged working can cause burn-out.

G. Social Impact of SNS on Society

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There has been significant concern about the risks of online social networking because of access to personal information and the related privacy settings.

In the survey participants were asked whether they have ever had a bad social networking experience. A considerable number of respondents in a survey (28%) reported having had a negative online experience with adults aged below 30 the most likely to export this (60%). For most respondents the issues were about unwanted people contacts or people posting inappropriate information online.

H. Negative Impacts of SNS

The negative effects of a new technology are never looked into in detail or not seriously discussed in public domain in the initial stages due the hype and excitement involved.
Sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Bebo shorten attention spans, encourage instant gratification and make young people more self-centered.

Hyper-networking is also being associated with depression, substance abuse, poor sleeping, suicide and poor academic performance.

Social networking websites are causing poor grammar, language usage and spelling.

Children get exposed to online predators. A single post of a picture or a poor comment can cause serious damage to the person's reputation.

Since several teens use social networking, it is quite easy to target one another.
When inappropriate comments are posted about an individual, everyone can see, but due to lack of witness, it becomes difficult for victim to ask for help.

Due to the increase in online technologies, fewer people are communicating in person, and person to person interactions are reducing. Many people are becoming used to only conversing through their computer. Without physical interpersonal interactions, we lose our language skills and have trouble with public speaking. Normal debates become more difficult. The SNS were made to make communication better, not to destroy it. SNS cannot become our main form of communication and interaction.

V. FUTURE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS

The discussions so far has made it clear that the social networking medium is here to stay, and in a strong way. It has made inroads into all the facets of the society, and is defining how people access information and uses it.
This opens up a great amount of opportunities to all categories of the society, which is discussed below.

A. Marketing

The current growth trends indicate that the next half-decade belongs to social media, and marketing based on this will be the fastest medium to advertise and sell products to end consumers. The growth of smartphones and the phenomenal growth in the number of users accessing social media from smartphones show clear directions on what is the next big thing.
Given the robust and growing social networking infrastructure available, marketers should focus on nurturing awareness, increase data collection measurements and focus on converting social media leads into sales. Further, the conversions should be tracked and appropriately tied to the social media metrics. This would provide enough justification for the management to increase the investment in social media marketing.
Marketers can achieve instant scale across the social media and create relevant content for individuals and niche audiences. They can create true relationships with customers, unlike other marketing channels. This also makes a strong case for more investment on social network based marketing initiatives.
These initiatives can be put into multiple areas of business from conventional CRM to sales and marketing.

B. Social Media for Consumers

The popularity of social media, the rapid growth, and also the emergence of newer platforms like Instagram, Pinterest, WhatsApp and Google Plus has provided end-users a multitude of communication options, and has redefined the ways of communication.
The democratization of media has been a great equalizer. Social media has given consumers a platform for airing their voices, thoughts and ideas for others to be heard and shared. It is not a one-way channel, but a two-way conversation platform. This provides consumers the power and ability to be heard, answered and involved.

C. Social media and Education

The use of social media is rapidly expanding into the educational sector. Pearson Learning Solutions publishes an annual survey, which indicates an increase in social media usage by educators.
Each year, Pearson Learning Solutions puts out the results of an annual survey of social media use in education. With the increased usage of blended learning and flipped classroom strategies, the increase of 21% in the last one year is not too surprising.

Faculty is now more interested in the ability to leverage social media to facilitate engagement with course material and to encourage the learning process.

Mobile technologies and the interactive nature of e-learning create a better learning environment for students. But there is also an issue of the increased amount of distractions in using the online and mobile technologies.

Nevertheless, a whopping 79% of educators believe that the use of e-learning and mobile technologies has increased the communication between teachers and students.

E-learning and social networks are very much a part of social life. This should be leveraged for educational purposes, but need to ensure that it has a positive impact on learning.

VI. CONCLUSION

As we saw in the previous sections, SNS has great impact on the society, in both benefits and challenges. The advantages are massive, especially for marketers for their next generation campaigns, and general public for a level medium for airing their views. As discussed above, there are benefits for education field as well, though not all possibilities are researched and studied to a great depth. Coming to the challenges and issues, there are several questions when we think about the negative impact of SNS. What does it take to manage online privacy in an ethical manner? How do online social media facilitate ethical thinking about privacy? Youngsters who share personal experiences online taking steps to protect their own and others' identities, but are these steps sufficient? Who is responsible, when an unintended audience can read a person's revealing blog or post? It is essential that we should focus on the ethical use of these SNS so that it serves our society in a right way and the youth can play an important role in this. From the perspective of general public, SNS, on one hand, it provides a way to communicate with the world, and connect our dear ones; while on the other side it gives a platform that can be dangerous for Indian heritage and culture.

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