

ARE SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES USEFUL?

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ABSTRACT

Social networking sites have grown from niche to a mass online activity, in which more than millions internet users engaged, both in leisure time and at work. In simple words, it is a website that provides a place for people community to share their personal views and activities with family members, relatives, friends and colleagues or to share their interest, suggestions and discussions in a particular topic at international online platform. In the present paper an attempt has been made to enquire about a research question i.e are social networking sites useful? For this, advantages and disadvantages of social networking sites were identified and then tips were given to use it safely in our daily life.

INTRODUCTION

Social Networking Sites are used by hundred of millions around this world. It seems that these sites have taken the world by a storm leading to nothing less than a revolution. Social network has emerged over the past 10 years. Within that time period, social networking sites have grown from niche to a mass online activity, in which more than millions internet users engaged, both in leisure time and at work. Social networking is a phenomenon which has existed since society began. Generally, human beings have always sought to live in social environments. Social networking sites are an online platform that provides new opportunity to users to create a public profile and express themselves with other users on websites. Social networking websites usually have a new user input a list of online people community with whom they share a connection and then allow the people on the list to confirm or deny the connection. In simple words, it is a website that provides a place for people community to share their personal views and activities with family members, relatives, friends and colleagues or to share their interest, suggestions and discussions in a particular topic at international online platform.

Facebook is the leading personal site, and LinkedIn is the leading business site. Globally, hundreds of millions of people have joined one or more social sites.

Members create their own online "profile" with biographical data, photos and any other information they choose to post. They communicate with each other by making their latest thoughts public in a blog-like format or via e-mail, instant messaging, voice or videoconferencing to selected members. The service lets members find and invite other members into their personal network as well as invite friends of friends.

In the present paper an attempt has been made to enquire about a research question i.e are social networking sites useful? For this, advantages and disadvantages of social networking sites were identified and then tips were given to use social networking sites safely in our daily life.

ADVANTAGES OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

So let's first look into the bright side of these social networking sites and how these are helping or benefiting us in our daily life:

- Good medium of communication: - They offer an easy and effortless way to communicate with friends, family and others with whom due to time and distance constraints we otherwise are not able to get in touch with or communicate.
- Build and expand connections: - We all have a circle of friends and acquaintances which we come across in different walks of life. These people too have their own network of friends and acquaintances. Now what social networking sites do is to help build a web of connections by connecting all these people through a common platform. Some of these connections can definitely prove valuable in the walk of life both professionally and personally.
- Build and promote businesses by engaging with others:- These networking sites can also be used as a tool or a medium to promote your business, blog or some special skill and service. With the help of these sites you can easily give and receive valuable business intelligence and feedback on institutional services. There are so many smart professionals who are making a good use of these networking sites to raise their visibility, get noticed, tell about their company, service, and get more clients through marketing their products.
- Provide a learning platform: - Another interesting fact of these networking sites is that they can act as a learning platform for informal learning and support social connections within groups of learners and with those involved in the support of learning. In fact any

organization can avail the benefits of these social networks for learning and training purposes and not just those involved in working with students.

- **Educational Benefits:** - There are various educational benefits of social networking to the students as well. It is up to students to discover the potential educational benefits for themselves from interacting and communicating with others.
- **Platform for shy people to express their feelings:** - Enables shy people to express their feelings, ideas and viewpoints more openly and confidently who otherwise find it difficult to express themselves openly in a face to face environment or situations.
- **Unlimited and easy access to information and services:-** Social networking sites provide an easy and unlimited access to information and services for any group, organization or individual who would like to learn either about some new application, use of some tool or service, the latest news etc.
- **Finding Good People:** - Social Networking sites like LinkedIn are a great resource for business owners to find new talent or even partners for a new venture.
- **Free Business Promotion:** - This is probably the biggest advantage for business owners using social networking sites. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+ and many others are great forums for you to talk about your business, your services and even exhibit your industry expertise.
- **Low Cost Advertising:-** Some social networking sites provide a business owner with the opportunity to advertise to a very specific demographic for very little money. So you can advertise to exactly the customer that you want to attract and save money versus other forms of advertising.
- **Build your credibility:** - By consistently interacting and posting a person can build trust and credibility amongst their audience which in turn can lead to more business.
- **Ease of Communication:-** Social networking sites allow you a fast and free resource for communicating with your customers and potential customers. Announce sales, promotions, special events and more by simply typing your message and posting it to your page or profile.

Social networking sites thus by virtue of these above mentioned points have not only made themselves popular among people and spread smiles all over the world but have also turned the world into a small place where everyone can easily stay connected.

DISADVANTAGES OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

However, while these social networking sites are loaded with goodies, they have a dark side too. So one need to be aware of the dangers associated with the use of these social networking sites and must be really careful while using these networking sites to stay secure and safe.

- **Security:-** Security is one of the topmost area of concern. Since social networking sites allow you to display your personal information such as name, location, and email address, security becomes a key issue of concern. There are some anti social elements who can misuse this information in the garb of some fake identity.
- **Wastage of time and effort:-** Social networking sites by their very nature are meant for regular and frequent communication, fun, entertainment, business activities etc. However, if you are not the kind of a person who is active enough to remain updated on these networking sites, such websites are nothing but a sheer wastage of time for you.
- **Increased incidence of cyber crime:-** One of the major pitfalls of these social networks is that they increased the incidence of cyber crime to an unimaginable proportion. Although many sites and organizations do employ certain measures to check these breaches of security and incidences of harassment, cyber-stalking, online scams, and identity theft to an absolute minimum, still there are loopholes even in the best security systems.
- **Identity theft:-** Another major problem with these networking sites is the rising identity theft which is increasing day by day due to the ease and access of internet technology and the increase in personal data found on social networking sites.
- **Loss of touch from the real world and emotions:-** Many times, while using these social networking sites for personal and professional purposes one gets so absorbed in the virtual world that he/she loses touch with the real world around him. Children tend to forget their parents, while parents tend to ignore their kids while getting addicted to the use of these social networking sites. This can prove to be detrimental to strong family bonds and relations.
- **Loss of productivity at workplace:-** The productivity of an individual and the organization as a whole is bound to suffer when the employees of the company invest even just about half an hour from their usual working hours using these social networking sites. Thus social networking sites can have a negative impact in the workplace, for both employers for employees and future employees.

- **Negative Publicity:-** People really like to use social networking sites as a place to express their frustration and disapproval of a business that they feel has wronged them in some way. Being on the receiving end of this negative publicity can have dire consequences, so it's important to keep your customers happy and respond quickly to any issues that someone does publicize.
- **Time Consuming:-** Social networking sites can suck you in and before you know it you've spent hours looking at pictures, videos, and reading clever posts. It's important to remember when using social networking sites for business purposes that you stay on task and only spend time on the things that help your business. 'If it doesn't make dollars, it doesn't make sense[cents]!' **Social Networking Sites Advantages and Disadvantages**
There are many more arguments that could be made for social networking sites advantages and disadvantages, but we believe that the advantages of using social networking sites far outweigh the disadvantages for any business owner (as long as you know what you are doing). The biggest benefit is that you will attract more business, keep more clients, and ultimately make more money!

TIPS TO USE SAFELY

Thus you see these social networking sites are like a two edged sword which although are of great help to us, they can also put our life and business in danger if we happen to be careless in our use of these networking sites. You must be therefore careful in the use of these websites if you truly want benefit from them either for fun, communication or business.

- Know what you've posted about yourself.
- Don't trust that a message is really from who it says it's from. Hackers can break into accounts and send messages that look like they're from your friends, but aren't. If you suspect that a message is fraudulent, use an alternate method to contact your friend to find out. This includes invitations to join new social networks.
- To avoid giving away email addresses of your friends, do not allow social networking services to scan your email address book. When you join a new social network, you might receive an offer to enter your email address and password to find out if your contacts are on the network. The site might use this information to send email messages to everyone in your contact list or even everyone you've ever sent an email message to with that email address. Social networking sites should explain that they're going to do this, but some do not.

- Type the address of your social networking site directly into your browser or use your personal bookmarks. If you click a link to your site through email or another website, you might be entering your account name and password into a fake site where your personal information could be stolen.
- Be selective about who you accept as a friend on a social network. Identity thieves might create fake profiles in order to get information from you.
- Choose your social network carefully. Evaluate the site that you plan to use and make sure you understand the privacy policy. Find out if the site monitors content that people post. You will be providing personal information to this website, so use the same criteria that you would to select a site where you enter your credit card.
- Assume that everything you put on a social networking site is permanent. Even if you can delete your account, anyone on the Internet can easily print photos or text or save images and videos to a computer.
- Be careful about installing extras on your site. Many social networking sites allow you to download third-party applications that let you do more with your personal page. Criminals sometimes use these applications to steal your personal information. To download and use third-party applications safely, take the same safety precautions that you take with any other program or file you download from the web.
- Think twice before you use social networking sites at work. For more information, see Be careful with social networking sites, especially at work.
- Talk to your kids about social networking. If you're a parent of children who use social networking sites, see How to help your kids use social websites more safely.
- Use a locking mailbox: For an identity thief, getting their hands on your paperwork can be just as easy as opening your mailbox and pulling out a few envelopes. Having a lock on your mailbox can protect you. You may also want to limit how long mail sits in your mailbox, as well — have the post office hold you're mail if you're out of town.
- Put your cards, passports and other documents somewhere safe: The fewer pieces of sensitive information you carry around with you every day, the less chance you have of losing something. If you've got a credit card you don't normally use, put that card away at home. It's worth creating a safe place at home where you can lock up credit cards, your Social Security card, passwords and other personal documents.

- Change your PINs and passwords regularly: While I think most people have gotten the full on lecture about not using obvious passwords (like your birthday), it's rare to find someone who changes their passwords on a regular basis. Changing your password regularly should go double for your bank and credit card accounts, as well as your email — the place where companies often send you your new passwords.
- Protect your computer: It may seem that your computer wouldn't be a main source of personal information, but it offers an identity thief tons to work with, such as the credit card information you use to shop online. Keeping your anti-virus software and spam filters up to date should be a priority no matter how much or how little you use your computer.
- Keep in mind how much information is already out there about you: When you're setting passwords and security questions, remember that information like the name of your high school, your mother's maiden name and even your first pet are probably out on the internet somewhere — maybe you blogged about them, maybe you filled in a survey. Try
- Minimize who actually has your information: Many of the forms that ask for your Social Security number and other personal information don't actually need it. You're well within your rights to ask how a particular organization plans to use particular bits of information before handing them over.
- Check into security breaches: If you hear that your information could have been included in a security breach, it's worth checking into. Banks and other companies with access to your information will usually be able to tell you just what information got out and what sort of problems to look for.

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