

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

1.1.1 The Emergence of Social Media

Over the last few decades, technology has penetrated everyone's life and influenced society. Impact of social media is visible in our daily lives. It is quite evident that social media, especially after the emergence of accessible and affordable smartphones, have changed the way society and relationships work. If one is sharing an idea, connecting people, buying a product or services, browsing through news item or any sort of information; it is used in almost every part of our lives, across the socio-economic spectrums.

Conceptually, Social Media refers to a broad ecosystem where web-based and mobile technologies turn communication and networking into an interactive dialogue. Social Networking, which is a subcategory of Social Media, is used for interactive, educational, informational or entertaining purposes. Social Media has numerous forms, mostly related and connected in the complex worldwide net as blogs, forums, podcast, photo sharing, social bookmarking, widgets, video, to name a few.

Literature suggests that Social Media, a product of Web 2.0 technology, represents a group of interactive tools and applications that allow for the creation and sharing of user-generated content (i.e., texts, photos, graphics, and videos) within virtual communities (Hamm et al., 2013a). Furthermore, the birth of social media services not only supported users in maintaining pre-existing social networks but also allowed them to connect with others based on shared identities and shared interests, views, and activities (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

1.1.2 Social Network

The concept of 'social network' relates to a social structure consisting of individuals who are connected and have a complex set of connections between themselves. Hence in the study of social relationships, the analysis of the role of social network assumes significance. In the present times, social network analysis has become one of the thriving paradigms in contemporary sociology. The philosophers and sociologists such as Emile Durkheim, Ferdinand Tonnies, George Simmel, Jacob L. Marenco, Bronislaw Malinowski, Alfred Radcliffe – Brown, Claude Levi-Straus, John A. Baren have given the prime of

place to social networks in their respective studies. However, the contemporary paradigm is beyond their technological imaginations.

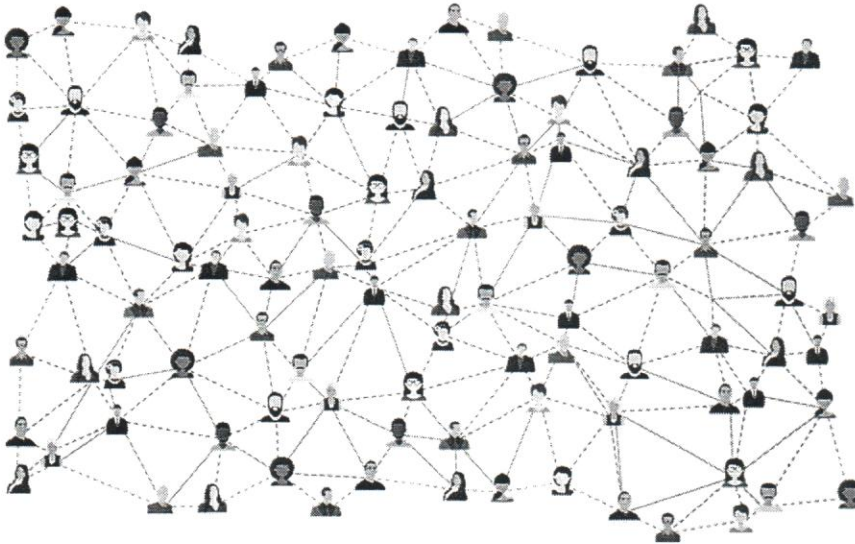


Figure 1. Concept of Social Network. Image Source: Pixabay

Social Networking Sites (SNS) vary in formats and number of features. However, the gist depends upon the idea of networking. From personal, social, career to real-life connections, it includes almost all age groups worldwide.

Today, social networking has become an essential part of life for people around the world. This technology helps people to stay connected and decide the purpose on their own. SNS dramatically influenced the lives of millions of people in the world, and they integrated these sites into their daily life.

There are many authors, scholars who did substantial work in this field of networking and enlightened us with both positive and negative aspects of social media as well as networking sites. For example, some discuss the attraction towards research, information; learning through SNS, and few elaborate social networking addictions, social media and health behaviour change. With different needs and age-appropriate situation, the scenario is different for every individual. The study talks about the vision and perception of teenagers about social networking sites as well as learning platforms. Before specifying the concepts taken by the author, below is the evolution of social networking which gave birth to a new era altogether.

1.1.3 Evolution

History and evolution of social networks may seem implausible at first, since quite a new concept a few decades ago. However, in a few years, the way it is seen now is quite different and also influenced and modified the lifestyle of its people. There is no particular or fixed time on which such network began, but it began to appear in the nineties. However, it is a gradual process may start decades ago when first sending of email was made.

With much advancement with the passing time invention of HTML language was a milestone, which changed the browsing process and made accessibly. In the year 1997 Instant messenger launched a program created by Microsoft Windows, which can be a precursor or most influential social networks currently, the WhatsApp instant messaging services.

With the explosion of new advancement in the new century, Orkut.com appeared with great success, one of the first social networks attempts that an individual created and later acquired by Google. With time, the emergence of social networks such as LinkedIn, WordPress, or YouTube stated the significant effect on the Internet. One such case is from the year 2004, when one of the most intrusive social networks was created, Facebook. In 2006 when it opened to the public, it drastically changed the history of social networks, and now most of the world is its active user.

In 2006 Twitter emerged and sensational as SMS communication. It made a great idea of the micro blogging network, a milestone in the history of social networks. Some of the networks of the last five years are Pinterest, Tumblr, YouTube, LinkedIn, and Snapchat.

1.1.4 Categories of Social Networking

One can categorise the social networking services into four types (Thelwall, 2009)

- a) **Socialising** Social connecting with people around and creating a network system.
Eg. Facebook, Instagram
- b) **Online social networks** are networks where Internet facilities should be available to communicate. i.e. the online mode, through which virtual classroom can be built. e.g. Google meet, Zoom App, Microsoft Teams
- c) **Networking** social network services used primarily for non-social interpersonal communication, e.g. LinkedIn

- d) **Social navigation** primarily for helping users to find specific information and resources. e.g. Goodreads for books and Pinterest for activities for kids

Through these categories, it is evident that the *need of the individual* decides the way on how SNS will be perceived. Due to free availability and user-friendly features allows Social Networking Sites to become a prime member of people's lives and helps them in many ways. SNS helps to construct a group within the bounded system to stay connected like Facebook or Instagram.

On any learning platforms, to groups like Byju's or Unacademy, one can learn at their own pace and according to their own interest. This motivates them to be part of such groups. Few might also be part of it so that the people in the virtual world recognise them; it works as emotional and psychological support also. Young YouTubers or Instagram pages can be one such example which many a time showcases their talent and the recognition they receive boost up their talent and enhances their skills too. This goes vice versa, too when it is misused. For some, it may be a platform to share similar personal, career interest or real-life connections. With all of this, the platform provides career opportunities and new start-ups to reach out to the larger populations.

In this fast-changing world, with so many simple technological changes, the usage of such networks has increased drastically. This leads to the personal connections made by the people on such platforms. The success of SNS can be seen in dominance in the society today like Facebook having a massive 2.13 billion active monthly users in 2017 (according to Facebook), LinkedIn, a career-oriented social networking service, Twitter, sending messages to people in the limited characters, and there are many such platforms.

1.2 DEFINING THE KEY COMPONENTS

1.2.1 Social Networking Sites (SNS)

A social network is a collection of individuals linked together by a set of relations (Downes; 2005). Online social networking sites 'virtually' link individuals, who may or may not 'know' each other. As a result, they enable rapid exchange of knowledge, high levels of dialogue and collaborative communication through text, audio and video (Siemens; 2006). Therefore, the inner core for the creation of SNS is the concept of the social network.

Social Networking Sites are social spaces designed to facilitate communication, collaboration, and content sharing across networks of connected people. SNS allows users

to manage, build and represent their social networks online. People use SNS for countless activities of which the most common uses include connecting with existing networks, making and developing friendships/contacts, creating an online presence for their users, viewing content/finding information, creating and customising Social Networking Sites are usually made up of other individuals; they might also include profiles of events, companies and even political parties. These SNS have rapidly gained popularity in recent times. By 2013, globally active memberships on Social Networking Sites had reached 1.73 billion. The social networks are online computer and information networks, linking people, organisation and so on. Also known as Web 2.0 technologies, the user-generated content is the lifeblood of social networking services.

“The things you share are things that make you look good, things which you are happy to tie into your identity.” — *Hilary Mason, chief data scientist, [bitly](#), [VentureBeat](#), 2012*

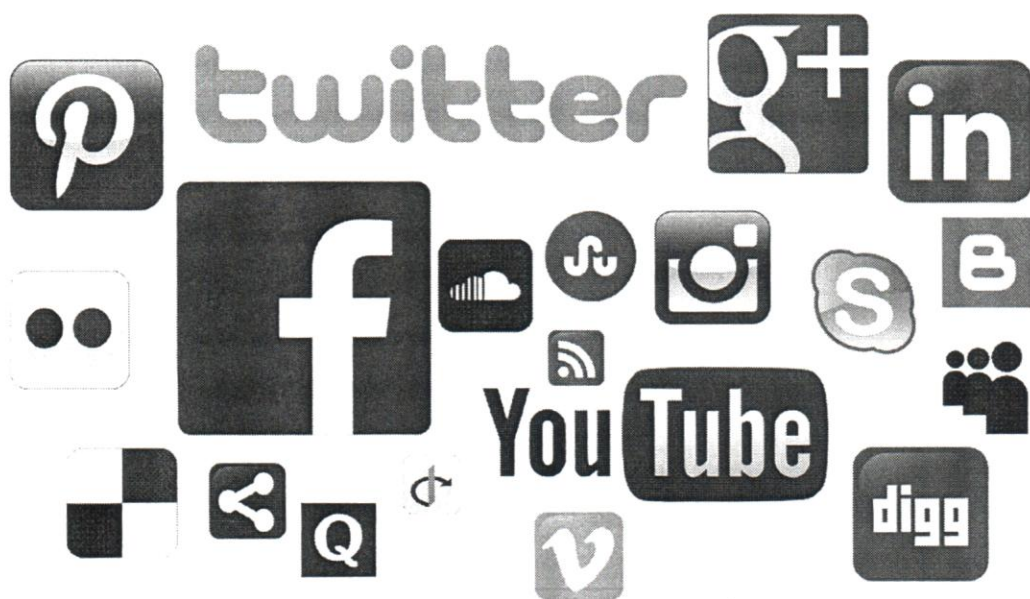


Figure 2. Social Media Sites. Source: Wikimedia CC

That could be the gist of networking sites. There are many under the heading. To mention a few:

- a. **Facebook** is an online social networking service with media integration founded by Mark Zuckerberg in the US Any person, who claims to be at least 13 years of age, can be a registered user of Facebook, from the year 2006. Though

this age varies depending on the local laws. (Wikipedia.com) .Some of the main features of Facebook are News Feed, Friends, wall, timeline, likes and reactions, comments, messages and inbox, notifications and groups, photos, videos tagging live streaming.

b. **Instagram** is an American photo and video sharing social networking service created by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger and owned by Facebook. The app allows the user to upload media that can be edited with filters and organised by organised and geographical tagging. Users can browse other users' content by tags and locations and view trending content. Users can upload self-created content and share through the feed. (Wikipedia.com)

c. **YouTube** is an online video sharing platform from America created the site in 2005, and Google bought the site, and today, YouTube now operates as one of Google's subsidiaries. It allows its users to upload, view, like/dislike, share, add to playlists, report, comment on videos, and subscribe to other users. It offers a wide variety of user-generated and corporate media videos.

d. **Twitter** is an American microblogging and social networking service in which users post and interact with messages known as "tweets". Registered users can post, like, retweets, but unregistered users can only read them. The 'tweets' were initially restricted to only 140 characters. However, in November 2017, they were doubled to 280 for non-CJK languages. Tweets with audio and video content remain limited to 140 seconds for the most accounts and users.

e. **WhatsApp** Messenger allows user to send text messages and voice messages, make audio, and video calls are sharing images, documents, user locations and other media. The applications run on mobile phones but accessible from desktop computers as well. These all above may come under the category of *Socializing*. These networks give people the power to build community and bring the world closer together. People use them to stay connected with friends and family, to discover what is going on in the world, and to share and express what matters to them.

f. **LinkedIn** is quite different from what described above. This is an online social network too but mainly used for professional networking, including employers posting jobs and job seekers posting their CV. This may come under the category

Networking used primarily for non-social interpersonal communication. The network created here may represent real-world professional relationships.

These days, people connect through cloud-based online audio and video conferencing. There are many platforms, which provide for such online chats, meetings, and classes. This boomed up as a great way of peer-to-peer software program for distance education and social relations. Few to mention are Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft teams, and many such are available. Most of them are paid, but free access is limited to less number of people involved. Online platforms like these allow bringing classroom learning at home.

All these may come under the category of *online social networks* in which Internet connectivity is mandatory. An online service or site to facilitate social interaction to help individual's fit others of common interest, establish a forum, and exchange information.

Moreover, there are many other *learning platforms*, also to name a few: ByJu's, Unacademy, Khan Academy, EdX, Coursera, Udemy etc. These are comprehensive e-learning programs and offering a personalised experience. However, again many of them are paid applications and free for a limited access. However, the Khan Academy is entirely free for everyone.

The purposes of SNS are endless. From Educational and learning mediums to entertainment; from socialisation on the source; from messaging to expressing platforms. It has so many faces to perceive and get engaged.

1.2.2 Teenager

Dictionary identifies teenager as the people from aged 13 years to 19 years. However, apart from numbers or age, teenager or adolescence is a period of life where the physical and mental exuberance of teens stimulate them to take advantage of what the world offers them. Induced by curiosity and enthusiasm, most of the teens try to imitate what they see and hear (Minimol & Angelina, 2015).

Moreover, the teenager is a time where the opinion of the people around and especially peers matter a lot, which outlines their perspective too. At this age, they want more independence and responsibilities and less parental control.

Due to all these psychological changes going, they become quite vulnerable and begin to adopt things around very quickly without reflecting much.

Through the use of technology, teens have become early adopters and exploiters of Internet usage and social media. Some researchers believed in the positive side of SNS and support its usage like Stienfield and Lampe (2011) supports the use of SNSs for educational purposes amongst teenagers; on the other hand, few suggest that SNSs are incredibly unsafe for teenagers like Kuppuswamy and Shankar (2010) suggested that SNS grabs the total attention and concentration of the students and may divert them towards unethical and inappropriate actions.

This study is going to reflect on the psychological perspective of teenagers about SNSs usage, and the researcher will attempt to articulate these perspectives comprehensively.

1.2.3 Perception(s)

Dictionary meaning of perception defines it as how something is regarded, understood or interpreted. In other words, it is the way one interprets the data around oneself.

There are many factors, which influence our perception for example; our **needs** will tell us that how we feel about certain situations, our **peer group** especially amongst teens that tells us desirable and non-desirable things around us, our **interests** also impact our perception.

In the case of SNS, one's perception of SNS plays a significant role in deciding the direction for life. This study is going to work towards the same.

In simple words, according to Merriam Webster dictionary is perception is the result of observation and making a mental image or concept.

1.3 RESEARCH ASPECTS

1.3.1 Purpose

The idea of this study is to see how social networking platforms affect the attitude of school-going children (here, teenagers). Further, the study focuses on student's perception towards the Social Networking Sites (SNS).

SNS nowadays influence both positively and negatively on one's perception. It may influence the student's academic performance and interactions among people around, or also it may enhance more significant social interaction via electronic media and provide greater access to information. This study is going to look deeper into the matter and will try to understand its users.

1.3.2 Problem Statement

Perceptions of School-going Teenagers towards Social Networking Sites: A Study

1.3.3 Rationale

The rate at which the media technology is booming is both encouraging and alarming, and it underscores the need for educators, teachers and researchers to stay updated with their rapid changes. Although the new technologies raise a concern about cognitive, social and physical being of the children, it also opens up the world to new positive ideas and possibilities. This study proposes to find different perception towards SNS with a vision of providing implications for both students and their parents about the usage of SNS.

1.4 OBJECTIVE

Objective 1: To identify different perception(s) of teenagers towards SNSs for the following:

- 1.1 Understanding and articulating the user-perceptions in a comprehensive way
- 1.2 Analysing the characteristics of derived user-perceptions
- 1.3 Looking for the educational implications of the user-perceptions

1.5 DELIMITATIONS

- Since the study is focusing on the describing feature of the perception(s) and its nature; it may neglect on the ‘why’ aspect of the perception.
- Also study includes the teenagers of classes VIII to XII, as the usage of Social Networking is more and hence data collection will have a lot of scope to get different perceptions amongst teenagers.