

Internet and the Hyper-real: Does Social Media Really Have a Negative Impact on Society?

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January 17, 2014

Abstract

Social networking sites, such as Facebook or Twitter have become the universal communication tool. They were created with the purpose of facilitating communication, which indeed they have. People can now communicate, share photos and other documents instantly and easily despite long distances. Recently there has been an increasing number of articles arguing that social media is replacing social interaction in real life. There is an ongoing argument that the increasing use of Facebook as a way to interact with friends and family, present oneself to the world and make new friends online is making people less social in daily activities. However, so far no serious academic research has proven these claims. This study aims to statistically determine whether social media is indeed harming the society, or the above mentioned claims are merely cyberphobic.

The evolution of social media has, without a doubt, changed the way people use the internet to communicate and share ideas, and arguably affected the way people communicate in general. Most young people use facebook for every kind of communication: they represent themselves through their profile, share all braking news with each-other almost instantly, have every-day chats with friends, make new connections, share their recent activities etc. But is this really a replacement for real life interactions? One could argue that the ability to so easily interact with so many other people and the fact that information is spread so fast makes people more informed, more literate and saves a lot of time, but it can't replace real life interaction because communication through social media is still very limited. In an attempt to end these discussions with scientific evidence, this study will survey people of different age groups and cultures and use statistical methods to analyse their behaviour. Subjects will be asked to take note of their daily activities for a week, and at the end of every day use the forms provided by us to report relevant indicators, such as: the time they spend on social networking sites, the time they spend with friends, the time they spend on different types of activities while on social networking sites and while being outdoors, etc.

How is social media affecting every day activities of modern population? Are there differences in its effects among different age groups? How about between

different genders? These are the research questions that will be attempted to be answered by this study. Hopefully, we will be able to determine whether we should try to defend ourselves from the threats of social media or this “fear” is unjustified.