Social Networking: A Quantitative Research Report into Impact, Attitudes, Behaviours and Use

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Abstract— The social networking phenomenon is revolutionizing the way in which we communicate with each other. But what of the legal issues and the dangers it brings. The addictive habit of social networking as a recent Web 2.0 phenomenon has created a revolution in the way we communicate with our peers. Dedicated social networking sites such as Facebook, My Space, You Tube and Flicker have exploded into our lives, Facebook in particular claiming more than 170 million subscribers worldwide. We can also include micro-blogging sites such as Twitter as social networks. The rise of social networking websites such as MySpace and Facebook over the past decade has been nothing short of phenomenal. Once regarded as nothing more than a passing ,fad, these websites have grown to astronomical proportions; each website currently boasts 60+ million unique visitors each month. Certain businesses are beginning to notice the potential for reaching out to their target audiences through this new medium and have already begun a series of advertising efforts in order to do so; however, the spend on this form of advertising is relatively minor compared to other efforts. This paper will establish why social networks are important to businesses as an advertising medium and attempt to review the current advertising methods that are in place.

Keywords— Social networks, Facebook, MySpace, YouTube Introduction

I. INTRODUCTION

The term "social networking" does not exclusively belong to digital technology on the Web . On the contrary , social networks had been studied from the beginning of 20th century with an aim to comprehend how the members of a certain community interact and which mechanism can determine the interaction itself. Today social networking commonly refers to all those activities that are carried out within specific online services that provides free space and software tools which allow to create networks of people. In other words, a social networking service is a Web site that allows individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile. The mechanism is as follows; social networking services enable users to create a profile for themselves, by inserting their personal data.

Users' data are not only constituted by vital statistics, but they include a lot of other information which pertains to user hobbies, passions, interests, professional background and so on.

The great strength of social networking are the multiple ways the users have to interact. Below is a list of the main communication resources used to build social networks: chat; messaging; wiki; email; video; voice; chat; file sharing; logging; discussion groups

II-TYPES OF SOCIAL NETWORKS

Types of Social Networking Websites

There are dozens of social networking websites available online, each with its own special something to offer its members. From knitting-enthusiasts to patriotic Norwegians, and everyone in between...

Broad-range social networking websites

Some social networking websites, such as Facebook, fall in the "general" category; they accommodate folks of all interests and backgrounds. On this type of social networking websites, members can often include a list of their interests.The main purpose of general social networking websites is to serve as a social platform where people can reunite with old friends, stay connected with current ones, and even make new acquaintances.

Niche social networking websites

Other social networking websites have tight, niche focuses, and cater to specific groups of people. Social networking websites can revolve around sports, dating, culture, hobbies, ethnicity, education, romance, entrepreneurship and more.For example, this social networking websites is geared towards film - members can gather on Flicker to discuss, debate, rate and review movies on a social platform: Social media has become a popular way to share information and content with others. Social Networking Sites are the sites that host social media. For those new to social media, it is good to know what types of social network sites there are and what each does.

Forums

Prob ably one of the first sites to allow for social interaction, forums have been around for a while. Forums are typically comprised of people with a similar interest. Users have conversations around a particular given topic and build up relationships with each other. They provide a great deal of information about a topic and is a great way to share your knowledge.

Blogs

Pe ople like to journal, and with the internet they wanted to share their lives more openly. Originally called web-logs, these personal journals have advanced. Some personal journals still exist, while other blogs discuss a particular niche or interest.

Micro-

Blogging

Similar to blogs, this is a micro journal of what is happening right now. These sites can share what is going on in an individual life or can be information the individual wants to share. Major news events are now breaking online via micro blogs. The best known micro blog is Twitter.

PhotoSharing

Social Networking Sites are known for sharing of information, in this case photos. Users upload their pictures to Photo Sharing Sites. Rather than having to send individual pictures to family, you send a single link. You can tag your photos with keywords related to the image and allow people to comment. Some popular photosharing sites are Flickr and Picasa.

Video Sharing

YouTube is the video sharing site that almost everyone has seen. Videos are shared online, keywords are added so people can search for those terms or for the video title. People can comment if the video owner allows. Like other forms of social media it allows for a more personal look of the actual user.

Professional

Networking has long been touted as an asset in professional circles. Networking allows the person to connect with people and by those connections meet other professionals that person knows. Professional social media allows for that type of opportunity online. Thus if you move away from your home town you can still remain connected to your ex-coworkers and others in your profession. Linked In is one of the top professional social networking sites.

Social

After you have worked with people a while, they may become your friends. Then you have friends from church, from your school, and friends you have met in a wide variety of ways. Social networking sites are about being social, so there are sites purely for allowing users to stay in touch with people whom they know. While MySpace was the leader, the current leader is Facebook. It is growing around the world.

Bookmarking

The major purpose of these social networking sites is the sharing of information. If you read a web page that is interesting, informative, or inspirational you may choose to bookmark it. By doing this you are saying that you like it. Your friends will learn what you liked and can choose to read it. Pages that many people bookmark become popular and drive others to that page as well. Dig, Delicious, and Stumble Upon are very popular bookmarking websites.

Other formats

There are other types of social networking sites out there, some are very similar to the ones mentioned here. Many sites have a major form of socializing and then use the other types as a other ways for users to interact. People love to socialize and interact, so this is a growing field with ever more sites.

III-SOCIAL NETWORK PROFILES

For the purposes of this paper, We have decided to focus on three social networks:
Facebook, MySpace and YouTube. Even though there are several social networks that are flourishing on the internet today, We went with these three websites for four reasons:

Reachability: Facebook, MySpace and YouTube are some of the most heavily trafficked websites on the internet today . Though the user base may be levelling off in the world, the websites show no signs of slowing down internationally. Even though theremay be some overlaps in user bases

among the three, this still gives advertisers relatively cheap platforms to easily target and reach out to a large global audience.

Prominence: As these websites are among the largest and most popular internet properties, it comes as no surprise that most businesses would use them to reach out to consumers. . In particular, YouTube's acquisition by Google in October 2006 allowed them to use Google AdSense, the most popular platform on the internet, in order to earn larger revenue streams. Also, the acquisitions of 1.5% of Facebook and MySpace by Microsoft and Fox Media respectively indicate the future potential for these websites.

Customizability: Businesses have a number of ways to develop

unique methods on these three websites. With the launch of Facebook Platform and MySpace Developer Platform, businesses can advertise through the creation of applications: widgets that can be added to a users profile in order to provide them with increased functionality such as entertainment, more information about the user and so on. In particular, Dell has been able to successfully reach out to users using a Facebook application; this will be examined in further detail later in the paper. Other customizable advertising methods include Facebook and MySpace pages/groups, Facebook gifts and YouTube channels for businesses. As will be established later in the paper, customizability is a large factor in successfully reaching out to users on these websites;less popular social networking websites do not offer this sort of functionality

Data and Personal Experience: As these three websites are among the most popular on the internet, there is no shortage of information on them. Business periodicals and research reports detailing every single facet of each websites operation are very easily available online. Traffic statistics, user base information and other relevant data may not have been easily available for other, less popular social networking websites. Additionally, we have used Facebook and YouTube extensively over a long period of time in order to connect with friends and watch videos

IV-HARM AND OFFENCE

Most research regarding potential internet-related harm relates to risky contact rather than content, primarily that involving interaction with other internet users. Indeed, this update found a number of studies that addressed the risk of inappropriate contact (e.g. bullying - for which more research exists than for the first review, and also online contact with strangers).

The research suggests that such contact may put users at risk of harm, either directly (as in meting strangers in dangerous situations) or indirectly, from the consequences of their online behaviour. For social networking especially, the issue of verifiability and anonymity is a problem. A significant proportion of young people communicate with strangers online and post material about themselves which would be considered 'private' in most circumstances. The ability to restrict access to sites is known about but not always used. Thus, knowingly, some young people give away inappropriate (private) information publicly (allowing access to 'anyone'). However, it seems likely that many more also do so inadvertently, as a result of limitations in both internet

literacy and interface design

This leads to concerns about the possibility of underestimating the unanticipated or future consequences of making private information public, especially since it appears that many young people have an inadequate understanding of the long-term consequences of publishing such information (e.g. employers are reported to look at social networking sites when considering employees) The risk of inappropriate contact (especially in relation to

sexual predation), harassment and bullying (including the easy dissemination of harassment or bullying content to others in the network) represent significant and growing policy concerns when considering the regulation of the internet.

Research suggests that young people may be aware of the risks, especially regarding social networking sites, but this awareness of these issues and problems is not always translated into action. Thus there is growing evidence that, notwithstanding their many advantages and pleasures, social networking sites permit young people to create profiles that expose the individual or that ridicule or harass others, that using such sites for extensive periods of time (as is common) may isolate users of these sites from contact with 'real' people, albeit only for a few, addicted users.

In short, the widespread accessibility of the internet, along with its affordability, anonymity and convenience appears to increase the likelihood of media harm; although some argue that there is little new about online content, familiar content merely having moved online, most disagree, expressing concern about the accessibility of more extreme forms of content that are, potentially, harmful and offensive.

It also appears likely that when children receive hostile, bullying or hateful messages, they are generally ill-equipped to respond appropriately or to cope with the emotional upset this causes; similarly, parents are unclear how they can know about, or intervene in, risky behaviours undertaken - deliberately or inadvertently -by their children. In general, the case for further research seems clear, firstly in relation to the characteristics of vulnerable groups (including strategies for intervention) and secondly in relation to the ways in which the internet seems to support or facilitate certain kinds of harmful peer-to-peer activity.

Figure 1: Awareness of who can see social networking profile
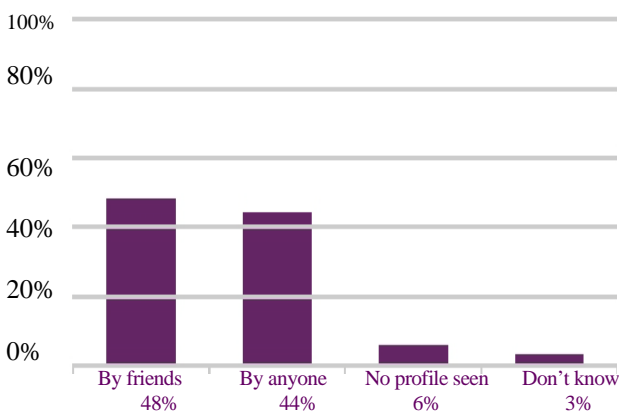
V-Uses Of Social Networking Site

The building blocks of social networking sites are the individual members' profiles. No two profiles are identical, but they typically contain basic information about the user such as name, sex, home town/country and contact details as well as other information such as race, religion and politics. Alongside this basic information, most social networking sites also allow users to write potted biographies about themselves and to go into great detail about their likes and dislikes. For example, on MySpace these are termed 'blurbs'. Very few of these categories, with the exception of the user's name, are compulsory to display on one's profile. However, many users do fill in their profiles in great detail, not least because they enjoy doing so.

Fun and leasuring activity:
It is clear that for the majority of people we spoke to, using social networking sites was much more than just a functional activity. Many users gained significant emotional rewards from contacting their friends and taking part in various online activities and games. For younger people an important feature of social networking sites is the ability to contact others in a playful way, using 'pokes' or similar gestures. These gestures are a feature of most social networking sites and, depending on the site are called names like Pokes, Fives, Love or something similar. They are a way of gesturing to other users and getting their attention.

Posting photos:
Users can post photos and videos on their social networking sites, in addition to their profile photo. Photos are important both for constructing and revealing one's identity, and for sharing important events and moments with a wide group of people (especially family and friends).

Exaggerating Personality:
Although some users enjoyed the opportunity to play around with their online identity, others found this tendency annoying. Our research found a strong degree of cynicism in some people about the things that others posted on their profiles and the ways in which they depicted themselves.

Building a social network:
Once the profile is set up, the user can begin social networking; that is, they can invite people to be their friends and accept friendship invitations from others to build up their friends list. Having such a potentially large network of friends has a number of benefits for users; keeping in touch with friends and family, keeping in touch with people not seen on a regular basis, finding old friends, contacting friends of friends, and contacting people they didn't previously know at all. By extending their social networks, users have the opportunity to communicate with people who share their interests, and with people from different countries, cultures and backgrounds. This is the fundamental principle of social networking.

Browsing profiles and collecting friends are popular activities:
After directly communicating with others, browsing profiles (their own as well as other people's) was the most popular activity for users. This was especially the case among the younger users we spoke to. For them, using social networking sites generally, and browsing in particular, were

serious leisure activities to rival other forms of entertainment such as television.

Figure:2-Popular social networking sites

CONCLUSIONS

Even though this paper attempts to shed some light on the developments in social media recently, there is still a great deal of work to be done in this topic. For one, advertise on social networking sites that went beyond the traditional banner ads started as recently as 2012. If another two or three years were to elapse, researchers would have data from many more advertising campaigns to work with in studying this phenomenon. One possible shortcoming of this paper is that it examines mostly successful cases in order to draw its hypotheses about successful criteria for online advertising. Unfortunately, time constraints and lack of information prevented the testing of these hypotheses against more unsuccessful cases. This is an area which cannot be ignored in future.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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