

Social networking: need of today's and its impact on society

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■ **ABSTRACT** : Internet for social networking is a popular tool among the new generation in the era of Information Communication Technology (ICTs). The use of multiple, collaborative technologies and Social networking site (SNS) leads to instant online community to communicate rapidly by voice, chat, instant message, video conferencing and services typically provides a platform to share a view in a very easy manners. Social networking site (SNS) has attracted millions of users, whom have integrated these sites into daily practices. The internet grown into a vast net of services and applications that entertains as well as serves as an indispensable work aid for millions of users around the world. For many young people, online social networking is not a distinct activity, but it is a part of day to day life, communication and interaction with peers. Since social networking has become a part of life especially the youth and new generations, therefore, present study was undertaken in Banaras Hindu University in the year 2011-2012 with the objective to study the duration, online activities and value associated with the respondents. The major findings of the study revealed that 82 per cent of the respondents were aware of social networking, 40 per cent used surfing daily internet in University, 68 per cent spent more than an hour on internet, 36 per cent used for gathering education input and 52 per cent visited the face book site on daily basis. This result reflected on line social networking (ONS) building and reflecting the social, educational, moral and informal relationships among people who wish to share interest, experience, educational perspective and social activities.

■ **KEY WORDS** : Social networking sites (SNSs), Online social networking (ONS), Blogging, Social media, Internet

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In the Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) era, the first useful Internet service for the masses was email then evolution the first of the graphical web in the form of websites. Today, this vast network has grown into a truly worldwide web (www) that is easily accessible to ordinary users, turning the Internet into a mainstream phenomenon.

Access to the Internet can be found at home, cyber cafes, offices, Internet kiosks, cafes and anywhere else where there is a meeting of people for social or business purpose. What assists Internet usage growth even more is the expansion of devices such as desktop computers, notebooks and Smartphone. Thus, not only has it grown in popularity but it has grown into a necessity in our everyday lives. Over the last few years, the Internet has expanded with powerful applications such as blogs, instant messaging, e-Commerce,

VoIP (which includes peer to peer voice communication), video, online news, podcasting, multiplayer gaming, photo sharing, online maps, GPS services and a lot of other terms have entered into the vocabulary as these services became popular with Internet users. As the Internet came out with more and more sophisticated services, inspired entrepreneurs brought many of these services together into sites that aimed to connect people. Online social networks focus on building and reflecting social relationships among people who share interests and or activities. Most social networks allow users to maintain profiles of themselves and lists of their friends. It encourages people to share their personal experience with others through music, videos and other media Aditya (2011). Of course, social networks are not a new phenomenon on the Internet as people began socializing with one another almost as soon as the

Internet came into being. Now a days there are many web sites dedicated to the Social Networking, some popular websites are Facebook, Orkut, Twitter, Bebo, Myspace, Friendster, hi5, and Bharat student are very commonly used by the people. These Web sites are also known as Communities Network Sites (CNS). Social networking websites function like an online community of internet users. Depending on the website in question, many of these online community members share common interests in hobbies, discussion. Once you access to a social networking website you can begin to socialize. This socialization may include reading the profile pages of other members and possibly even contacting them. According to Ahmed, 2011, social networking websites provide rich information about the person and his network, which can be utilized for various business purposes. Some of the main characteristics of social networking sites are:

- Acts as a resource for advertisers to promote their brands through word-of-mouth to targeted customers.
- Provides a base for a new teacher-student relationship with more interactive sessions online.
- Promote the use of embedded advertisements in online videos.
- They provides a platform for new artists to show their profile.
- It enables not only instant communication with friends but also sharing of similar interest to the others.
- It allows the business to reduce the cost of marketing or connect with the customers.
- To share the educational materials instantly.

History of social networking :

The first social networking websites was launched in the year 1997 Sixdegrees.com. This company was the first of its kind; it allowed user to create their profiles, provide a list of friends and then contact them. Six Degree promoted itself as tool to help people connect with and send messages to others. However, the Company did not do very well as it eventually closed in 2000. The reason for this was that many people using the internet at that time had not formed many social networks hence there was little room for maneuver. It was simply ahead of its time.

It should be noted that there were also other elements that hinted at Social network websites. For instance, dating sites required users to give their profiles but they could not share other people's websites. Additionally, there were some websites that would link former school mates but the lists could not be shared with others (Cassidy, 2006). From 1997 – 2001, number of community site began with supporting various combinations of profiles and publicly articulated friends. Asian Avenue, Black Planet and MiGenete allow users to create personal profile without seeking approval for those connections. After this there was the creation of Live Journal

in the year 1999. It was created in order to facilitate one way exchanges of journals between friends. Another company in Korea called CY world was started in 1999 and added some social networking features in the year 2001. This was then followed by Lunar Storm in Sweden during 2000-2001. They include things like diary pages and friends lists. Additionally, Ryze.com also established itself in the market (Skog, 2005). It was created with the purpose of linking business men within San Francisco. The Company was under the management of Friendster, LinkedIn, Tribe.net and Ryze. The latter company was the least successful among all others. However, Tribe.net specialized in the business world but Friendster initially did well; this did not last for long. (Cohen, 2003). From 2003 onward, so many SNSs were launched, prompting social software analyst Shirky (2003) to coin the term "Yet Another Social Networking Service" (YASNS). It was profile-centric site, trying to replicate the early success of Friendster or target –specific demographics.

Prominent social networking sites (SNSs) :

The most significant social networking websites commonly used by the people especially by the youngster like, Friendster, Myspace, Facebook, Downlink, Ryze, Six Degrees, Hi 5, LinkedIn, Orkut, Flickr, YouTube, Reddit, Twitter, Friend Feed, Bharat Student and Floper. Ahmed (2011) described the following Social Networking Sites (SNSs) in his paper entitled "A short description of social Networking Web Sites and its uses"

Friendster :

Friendster began its operations in the year 2002. It was a brother company to Ryze but was designed to deal with the social aspect of their market. The company was like a dating service, however, match making was not done in the typical way where strangers met. Instead, friends would propose which individuals are most compatible with one another. At first, there was an exponential growth of the company. This was especially after introduction of network for gay men and increase in number of bloggers. The latter would usually tell their friends about the advantages of social networking through Friendster and this led to further expansion. However, Friendster had established a market base in one small community.

After their subscribers reached overwhelming numbers, the company could no longer cope with the demand. There were numerous complaints about the way their servers were handled because subscribers would experience communication breakdowns. As if this was not enough, social networks in the real world were not doing well; some people would find themselves dating their bosses or former classmates since the virtual community created by the company was rather small. The company also started limiting the level of connection between enthusiastic users (Boyd, 2004).

My Space :

By 2003, there were numerous companies formed with the purpose of providing social networking service. However, most of them did not attract too much attention especially in the US market. For instance, LinkedIn and Xing were formed for business persons while services like MyChurch, Dogster and Couchsurfing were formed for social services. Other companies that had been engaging in other services started offering social networking services. For example, the YouTube and Last. FM was initially formed to facilitate video and music sharing, respectively. However, they started adopting social networking services (Backstrom *et al.*, 2006).

Facebook :

This social networking service was introduced with the purpose of linking friends in Harvard University in 2004. Thereafter, the company expanded to other universities then colleges. Eventually, they invited corporate communities. But this does not mean that profiles would be interchanged at will. There are lots of restrictions between friends who join the universities social network because they have to have the education address. Additionally, those joining corporate network must also have the .com attachment. This company prides itself in their ability to maintain privacy and niche communities and have been instrumental in learning institutions (Charnigo and Barnett-Ellis, 2007).

Downelink :

This website was founded in 2004 for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community. Some features include social networking, weblogs, internal emails, a bulletin board, Downe Life and in the future, a chat.

Ryze :

The first of the online social networking sites, Adrian Scotts founded Rzye as a business-oriented online community in 2001. Business people can expand their business networks by meeting new people and join business groups, called Networks, through industries, interests, and geographic areas.

Six Degrees :

Six Degrees was launched in 1997 and was the first modern social network. It allowed users to create a profile and to become friends with other users. While the site is no longer functional, at one time, it was actually quite popular and had around a million of members.

G. Hi5 :

Hi5 was established in 2003 and currently boasting more than 60 million active members according to their own claims. Users can set their profiles to be seen only by their network members. While Hi5 is not particularly popular in the U.S., it has a large user base in parts of Asia, Latin America and Central

Africa.

LinkedIn :

LinkedIn was founded in 2003 and was one of the first mainstream social networks devoted to business. Originally, LinkedIn allowed users to post a profile and to interact through private messaging.

Orkut :

Launched in January 2004, is Goggle's social network, and while it's not particularly popular in the U.S., it's very popular in Brazil and India, with more than 65 million users. Orkut lets users share media, status updates, and communicate through IM.

Flickr :

Flickr has become a social network in its own right in recent years. They claim to host more than 3.6 billion images as of June 2009. Flickr also has groups, photo pools and allows users to create profiles, add friends and organize images and video.

YouTube :

YouTube was the first major video hosting and sharing site, launched in 2005. YouTube now allows users to upload HD videos and recently launched a service to provide TV shows and movies under license from their copyright holders.

Reddit :

Reddit is another social news site founded in 2005. Reddit operates in a similar fashion to other.

Twitter :

Twitter was founded in 2006 and gained a lot of popularity during the 2007. Status updates have become the new norm in social networking.

Friend Feed :

Friend Feed launched in 2007 and was recently purchased by Facebook, allows you to integrate most of your online activities in one place. It is also a social network in its own right, with the ability to create friends lists, post and updates.

Bharat Student :

Bharat Student is a social utility that brings together all the young Indians living across the globe. It is for every young Indian who is a student or a non-student, fresh graduate, a working professional or an entrepreneur, and is focused on providing comprehensive solutions for any personal and professional issues.

Fropper :

Fropper is all about meeting people, making new friends

and having fun with photos, videos, games and blogs Come, become a part of the 4 million strong Fropper communities.

Growth of selected social networking sites (SNSs) worldwide:

Social networking sites, in India, that Facebook.com grabbed the number one ranking for the first time in July 2010 with 20.9 million visitors, up 179 per cent versus year ago. The social networking phenomenon continue to gain steam worldwide, in India represents one of the fastest growing market at the moment, “Though the Facebook has tripled its audience in the past year to pace the growth for the category, several other social networking sites have posted their own sizeable gains.” More than 33 million Internet users age 15 and older in India visited social networking sites in July 2010, representing 84 per cent of the total Internet audience. India now ranks as the seventh largest market worldwide for social networking, after the U.S., China, Germany, Russian Federation, Brazil and the U.K. (Table A). The total Indian social networking audience grew 43 per cent in 2010, more than tripling the rate of growth of the total Internet audience in India.

Definition :

Boyd and Ellison 2007 define social network sites as web-based services that allow individuals to-

- Construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system.
- Articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection.
- View and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.

The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site. While we use the term “social network site” to describe this phenomenon, the term “social networking sites” also appears in public discourse, and the two terms are often used interchangeably. We chose not to employ the term “networking” for two reasons: emphasis and scope.

“Networking” emphasizes relationship initiation, often between strangers. While networking is possible on these sites, it is not the primary practice on many of them, nor is it what differentiates them from other forms of computer-mediated communication (CMC).

Users who join social networking websites are required to make a profile of themselves by filling up a form. After filling up the forms, users are supposed to give out information about their personality attributes and personal appearances. Some social networking websites require photos but most of them will give details about one’s age, preference, likes and dislikes. Some social networking websites like Facebook allow users to customize their profiles by adding multimedia content. (Geroimenko and Chen, 2007).

Social computing is the collaborative and interactive aspect of online behaviour. The term can be understood in context to personal computing which describes the behaviour of isolated users element of social computing include blogs , wikies Twitter RSS ,instant messaging , multiplayer gaming and open source development ,as well as social networking and social bookmarking sites.

Social networking Sites (SNSs) have attracted millions of users, whom have integrated these site into daily practices. Online Social Networking (ONS) presents many opportunities to young people by making it easier for them to, amongst other thing: publish creative works to local and global audience : stay in touch and communicate with peers ; find and share interest ;organize and coordinate political engagement and action , blogging and photo / video sharing.

Online social networking is a disruptive technology. It has grown from now here to wide spread_use in under five years and will continue to have a significant impact on the way in which young people interact with each other and with their wider world both young and as adult in the future. Social networking sites have become an integral part of today’s culture especially for teenagers and social media technologies take on many different forms including Internet forum, Weblog,

Table A: Growth of social networking site worldwide

Sr. No.	Social networking sites worldwide	Growth of social networking sites		
		July 2009	July 2010	Per cent change
1.	Unite states	131088	174429	33
2.	China	NA	97151	NA
3.	Russian federation	25743	37938	47
4.	Germany	20245	35306	74
5.	Brazil	23966	35221	47
6.	United kingdom	30587	35153	15
7.	India	23255	33158	43
8.	France	25121	32744	30
9.	Japan	23691	31957	35
10.	South Korea	15910	25962	57

Source: Ahmed, (2011)

Social blog, Podcast, Video, Micro blogging, Wikies picture, Rating and social bookmarking. All of these share a high degree of community information, user generated content and characteristics. Over the past years, the internet has been an impressive growth in user driven applications. This trend can be referred by the term 'Social media' as online applications increasingly support the creation of value by social networks. Since Social networking has become a part of life especially the youth and new generations, therefore study was undertaken with the objective to study the duration, online activities and value associated with social media.

■ RESEARCH METHODS

The present study was conducted among the students enrolled in Banaras Hindu University (BHU), Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh) in 2011-2012. BHU is one of the ancient and top rank universities in the country and privileged to have the round the clock internet connectivity in all the departments, library and as well as in the hostels. To study the duration, online activities and value associated to social media, BA II and III year students of social sciences subject such as History, Economics, Hindi, Political Science and Geography were selected.

A total of 100 students were selected by adopting simple random sampling (SRS) techniques. Information was collected personally through well structured interview

schedule. This was supported by the informal discussion with the respondents. The interview schedule was pre-tested and modified based on suggestion, opinion made by the respondents and experts and finally the data was collected by personal interview method. The data were compiled and analyzed by simple statistical tools to draw the meaningful conclusion.

■ RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The understanding of duration, online activities and value associated to social media, among the students would not help only in comprehensive level of Information Communication Technologies but also in planning and taking an appropriate decision towards research and how to avail the services to the whole community in a safe, efficient manner.

From Table 1, the findings clearly reflected that majority of the respondents 82 per cent were aware of social networking and only 18 per cent respondents were unaware of this. Those who are not aware regarding SNSs mainly have lack of computer knowledge and belong to rural background, 40 per cent respondents use internet daily, 35 per cent use internet weekly, 20 per cent monthly and only 5 per cent respondents were surfing internet occasionally.

The daily internet users mostly belonged to urban setting and had the internet facility at their home also. 35 per cent respondents used surfing social networking sites on personal

Sr. No.	Parameters	Judging factors	Responses in per cent
1.	Awareness	Yes	82
		No	18
2.	Frequency of going internet	Daily	40
		Weekly	35
		Monthly	20
		Occasionally	5
3.	Internet surfing place	Personal computer	35
		Cyber café	25
		University campus	40
4.	Time spent on internet	Less than 1 hour	32
		>1- 2 hours	40
		>2- <3 hours	17
		More than 3 hours	11
5.	Period of starting social networking	Within the last 6 months	30
		1 year ago	26
		2 years ago	24
		More than two years ago	20

computer, 25 per cent respondents used at cyber café and 40 per cent students used SNSs at University campus either in the respective department, library, hostel or at computer centre. Recently University has restricted to surfing the SNSs only in the hostels not in the library and the computer centre because it badly hampered the educational

environment. 32 per cent of the respondents used internet for 1 hour persisting, 40 per cent respondents for 1-2 hours, 17 per cent respondents used 2-3 hours and 11 per cent respondents used surfing the SNSs more than 3 hours. If we look into the results, 68 per cent of the respondents spent more than a hour daily to surfing the SNSs, online library,

Table 2 : Distribution of respondents on general aspects of social networking sites (SNS)			
Sr.No.	SNSs parameter	Judging factors	Response in percentage
1.	Website uses frequently	Face book	52
		Orkut	10
		Twitter	16
		Wikipedia	22
2.	Online activities	Updating profile	18
		Chatting	35
		Getting educational input	26
		Commenting on profile	21
3.	Functionality	Chat box	25
		Wiki	23
		Forum	22
		Blog	9
		Voting tool	10
		Rating tool	11
4.	Expenditure justified	Yes	82
		No	18
5.	Benefits through SNSs	Stay in touch in friends	34
		Make new friend	30
		Play games	32
		Invite people to events	4
6.	Drawback of SNSs	Risk of privacy	30
		Waste of time	25
		Unwanted content	25
		Inappropriate comment	30
7.	Extremities related to SNSs	Pornography	35
		Hacking	25
		Flirting	22
		Data diddling	18
8.	SNSs should be banned	Yes	84
		No	16

preparing for class room assignment, project formulation etc. 30 per cent of the respondents used surfing social networking sites within last 6 months, 26 per cent 1 year ago, 24 per cent 2 years ago and 20 per cent more than 2 years. When results critically analyzed, it reflected that 100 per cent of the students used surfing SNSs after admission in the University. This means that earlier they were not much aware about these sites.

As perusal of data in Table 2 reveals that 52 per cent respondents used Face book 10 per cent Orkut, 16 per cent Twitter and 22 per cent respondents used Wikipedia. From June 2006 to June 2007 Facebook.com experienced even stronger growth during this time frame, jumping 270 per cent to 52.2 million visitors (Ahmed, 2011). The current and most popular social networking site in the world is Facebook, which has grown into more than 300 million active users with an average of 50 per cent of them logging onto Facebook every day. At least 8 billion minute are spent on Facebook each day. One of the reasons, Facebook is so addictive is because it is a convenient way to track the status of friends (Ishak, 2008). 18 per cent of the respondents using the internet for updating their profile, 35 per cent chat online, 26 per cent getting educational input and 21 per cent respondents used social networking site to commenting on profile. It is evident from Table 2 that 25 per cent internet users used chat box, 23 per cent wikis, 22 per cent forum, 9 per cent blog, 10 per cent voting tool and 11 per cent respondents used voting tool. Majority of the respondents (82 per cent) agreed that expenditure spent on social networking sites is justified and only 18 per cent respondents did not agree to spend money on social networking sites. They say that it is wastage of time and also badly affects the education setting. As far as benefits is concerned, SNSs staying is in touch with friends playing game, making new friend and invite people to important events. SNSs is not only beneficial but also a threaten the youth, 30 per cent think that there are risk of privacy when using SNSs, 25 per cent felt waste of time, 25 per cent respondents felt unwanted content and 30 per cent respondents felt that there are inappropriate comments while using social networking site coming in the personal profile. While social networks generally are having positive impact on businesses, especially reputable ones who take time to engage online with their customer base and there are also negative impacts on society. For one, it is impacting the workplace. A recent survey in the UK revealed that the cost to the economy due to use of social networking sites like Twitter and Facebook by office workers during office hours could be over GBP 1.38 billion per year. The survey found that more than half of office workers used these social networking sites for personal use during the working day, and admitted to wasting an average of 40 minutes a week each. 35 per cent of the respondents were aware of social networking related

extremities like pornography, 25 per cent aware of Hacking, 22 per cent aware of Flirting, 18 per cent respondents were aware about Data did ling. It requires great caution to users. It is very likely that some of them would be using these accounts to lure young people. Also, as more and more people spend their online time inside social networks, spammers and phishes have also appeared on these sites. The amount of private information posted by users on social networks is worrying. Friends are more likely to fall for these scams as it would seem to originate from a trusted friend.

Privacy is another major concern. Already people have lost jobs because the information they posted on social networks was not liked by their employers (Ishak, 2008). At the end majority of respondents felt that SNSs should not be banned. Only 16 per cent respondents felt that SNSs should be banned. Most of the respondents agreed that it provides a platform to easy, instant communicate the message, information sharing, new interest, explores opportunity, business promotion etc. No one will deny the benefits of being able to easily keep track on the latest happenings and interact within a network of people, groups or companies that share a person's interest.

Conclusion :

Social network offers people to great convenience way for social networking. It allows people to keep in touch with friends and with old friends, meet new people and even conduct business meeting online. In modern era that we call age of technology, contributes special opportunity and services to our community. Social computing and online communities have created new era of the web where information and communication technologies are facilitating organized human endeavour in fundamentally new ways. The impacts of social computing in diverse domain are mostly benefited to human community. This study indicates that majority of the youngsters use social networking sites and they were also aware about related extremities. The awareness of social computing was very much in shape. A considerable proportion of respondents understood after joining social networking there are risk of privacy. No doubt the social networking has attracted to the millions of users but side by side it has the demerits like addiction, identity theft, danger to kids/predators, privacy, wrong /negative information and badly hampered the educational settings.

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