

## THE ROLE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SERVICES IN GLOBAL COMMUNICATION

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Social Networking Services (SNS) are changing the ways in which people use the Internet. Young people are particularly quick to use the new technology. Social networking services are also developing rapidly as technology changes with new mobile dimensions and features. Children and young people, who have grown up taking the Internet and mobile technologies for granted, make up a significant segment of “the beta generation”, – the first to use positive opportunities and benefits of new services, but also the first to understand the risk.

A social networking service is an online service, platform, or site that focuses on building and reflecting social networks or social relations among people, who, for example, share interests and activities. Social networking services can be broadly defined as internet– or mobile–based social spaces designed to

facilitate communication, collaboration, and content sharing across networks of contacts. A social network service consists of a representation of each user, his/her social links, and a variety of additional services. Most social network services are web-based and provide means for users to interact over the Internet, such as e-mail and instant messaging. Online community services are sometimes considered as a social network service, though in a broader sense, social network service usually means an individual-centered service whereas online community services are group-centered [1]. Social networking sites allow users to share ideas, activities, events, and interests within their individual networks.

The main types of social networking services are profile-based SNS, content-based SNS, multi-user virtual environments, mobile SNS, micro-blogging services or presence updates and social searches.

Profile-based services are primarily organized around members' profile pages – pages which primarily consist of information about an individual member – including their picture, interests, likes and dislikes. Bebo, Facebook and MySpace, are all good examples of this. Users develop their space in various ways, and can often contribute to each other's spaces – typically leaving text, embedded content or links to external content through message walls, comment or evaluation tools. Users often include third-party content (in the form of “widgets”) in order to enhance their profiles, or as a way of including information from other web services and social networking services [2].

In content-based services, the user's profile remains an important way of organizing connections but plays a secondary role to the posting of content. Photo-sharing site Flickr is an example of this type of service, one where groups and comments are based around pictures. Other examples of content-based communities include YouTube.com for video-sharing and last.fm, where the content is arranged by software that monitors and represents the music that users listen to.

Many social network sites, for example MySpace and Twitter, offer mobile phone versions of their services, allowing members to interact with their friends via their phones.

Micro-blogging services such as Twitter and Jaiku allow you to publish short messages publicly or within contact groups. They are designed to work as mobile services, but are popularly used and read on the Web as well. Many services offer “status updates” – short messages that can be updated to let people know what mood you are in or what you are doing. These can be checked within the site, read as text messages on phones, or exported to be read or displayed elsewhere. They engage users in constantly updated conversation and contact with their online networks [2].

By the number of users the leaders are Facebook (750 million), MySpace (255 million), Twitter (200 million), VK (159 million), Windows Live Spaces (120 million) [1].

The advantages of such services are the following:

- Low costs. It's cheaper to use online social networking for both personal and business use because most of it is usually free. While personal use is rather simple for anyone, the business functions are underestimated by many.
- Credibility. You definitely can gain the customers' confidence if you can connect to them on both a personal and professional level.
- Connections. You are friends with people who have other friends, and so on. There is potential in such a common situation. By using a social networking site, you can do what you can and get connected with these people to form a web of connections [3].

But for sure social networking sites have a negative influence on children, teenagers and adults, increase the ease and prominence of cyber bullying, increase personal insecurities and feed addictions and weaken strong personal ties. Social networks create distraction and decrease productivity and profits within the workplace and can also jeopardize a company's reputation. Social networks also increase the ease of identity theft and bring to light other privacy issues as well as lead to an overall decrease in our face to face social skills and confidence.

Another topical problem is revolutions via social networking sites. If to take the Arab countries where media is fully controlled by the government, people who have the same interests can communicate easier than ever via social networking sites. One can say that the success of the Egypt Revolution in 2011 was due to the social networks such as Facebook and Twitter. Facebook is the start of this revolution. The protesters could easily plan and organize everything they needed via Facebook. Twitter played the role of the intensifier in this revolution. Twitter can spread news in Facebook by placing Facebook link in the tweet. In every re-tweet people in your network will see the message; this process is re run many times and reaches even more people as the virus that can infect one another [4]. It shows that social networking sites in the hands of dangerous for the society people can cause more harm than good.

To conclude, social networking has become one of the main communication tools we use in the world. It can only develop into a bigger and better communication tool.

## Literature references

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