Social Media for Beginners

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Abstract— Social media (or social networking) is a universal phenomenon. It is the most popular online activity worldwide. It empowers people to share their opinions with others online. It has opened new ways of communication in the hyper-connected world. It has become an integral part of modern society as they provide means of interacting and socializing. This paper briefly introduces beginners to social media.

Keywords— social media, social networks, social networking, online communities

I. INTRODUCTION

All media are social in the sense that they establish and maintain relations among humans as individuals and collectives [1]. Traditional social media include written press, TV, and radio. Modern social media, also known as social networking, include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, and YouTube. We live in the modern society where social media has become a global phenomenon and where individuals are continuously connected through mobile devices.

A social media (SM) is any medium of communication that allows two-way interaction. Social media are computer-mediated communication tools that enable users to share and consume content through varied modalities such as text, image, and video. Social media provide users with interactive services in which they can communicate with friends, family, and organizations all over the world. They allow you see what is going on in the lives of friends, and allows you to let them know what is going on in your life. They are typically free and open to anyone with an email address to join.

Since its introduction, social media has attracted more and more users. The use of social media has become pervasive and ubiquitous in American society. From text messaging to online dating, American significantly use social media in their everyday life.

II. BASIC FEATURES OF SM

These are some common features of social media [2,3]:

1. Accessibility: They are easily accessible with little or no cost.

2. Connectedness: They facilitate the development of online social networks by connecting people and bringing the world together.

3. Communications: They foster communication between individuals or organizations.

4. Reach: They offer unlimited reach to all content available to anyone, anywhere.

5. News media: They allow political news and information, true or not, to spread quickly.

6. Collaboration: They are computer-mediated technologies that facilitate the creation and sharing of information and ideas.

Social media takes on many forms. The six basic forms are [4]: (1) social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, (2) blogs - websites which allow users to subscribe, update, and leave comment, (3) wikis – collaborative website such Wikipedia which used to edit content, (4) podcasts – audio or video files that are published on the Internet, (5) content communities which share particular kinds of content, and (6) microblogging - allows instant publishing of content via Twitter. Other forms include Internet forums, photographs or pictures, video, and social bookmarking. These and other activities on the social media are illustrated in Figure 1 [5].
III. POPULAR SM

The six most popular social media platforms are described here [6].

- **Facebook**: This is the most popular social media in the US and the rest of the world. It was launched on February 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg (ex-Harvard student). Facebook can sensitize individuals (consumers) about many products and services. A company can use Facebook to communicate their core values to a wide range of customers. President Barack Obama seemed to be more liked on Facebook than his opponent Mitt Romney.

- **Twitter**: Twitter was launched on July 2006 to provide a microblogging service. It allows individuals and companies to post short messages, share content, and have conversations with other Twitter users. Many Twitter posts (or "tweets") focus on the minutiae of everyday life. Twitter is well known as the most popular microblogging site.

- **LinkedIn**: This is a networking website designed for the business community. It was created in 2002 by Reid Hoffman. It allows people to create professional profiles, post resumes, and communicate with other professionals. LinkedIn is now the world's largest social network for professionals. It can be used as a tool for career management and job hunting. Serious professionals and businesses should not ignore this quintessential professional network.

- **YouTube**: YouTube has established itself as social media. It was launched in May 2005. It allows individuals to watch and share videos. YouTube may serve as home to aspiring filmmakers who might not have industry connections. It is most popular online video community in the world. Searching on YouTube is second only to Google. YouTube can be both a blessing and a curse for some companies.

- **Myspace**: Myspace was established in 2003 by Specific Media and Justin Timberlake. Its main appeal is the ability to connect with brands and individuals. Its usage has declined over the years.

- **Instagram**: This is a social network that is currently only available through a free iPhone app. It is an image-based social media platform. It allows users to send and share videos and photos. Users can find and follow individuals and brands. It has become popular among young social media users, aged between 12 and 24 years.

Other social media include Myspace, Tumblr, Instagram, Reddit, Pinterest, Flickr, Forum, Yelp, Snapchat, Bebo, WeChat, Foursquare, Goodreads, Google+, and Vine Camera.

IV. APPLICATIONS

Social media has become a major source for analyzing all aspects of our daily life. People around the globe are taking advantage of social media as an open forum. Here we consider the six common applications of SM.
Marketing: Social media is a critical area of interest for marketers. Social media marketing helps companies to increase brand exposure and broaden customer reach. Mobile social media tools can be applied for sales promotion, marketing research, communication, and relationship development. Mobile social media communication is either company-to-consumer or user-generated content. Social media is also often used for crowdsourcing, which is the process of getting work done by online community or crowd of people in the form of an open call.

Government: The modern society operates on political and economic exchange relations. Social media plays an important role in the participation and democratization process. It gives everyone a voice to speak out and be heard. The rapid spread of news and information on social media for political means can help campaigns immensely. The Barack Obama presidential campaign in 2008 is a good example. Governments use social media because that is where people are. They leverage unique characteristics of emerging channels and put human face on government. Social media has led to the realization of the idea of an open government that embraces transparency, participation, and collaboration [7, 8]. In some countries, police monitors citizens’ use of social media.

Education: The use of social media is evident in education. Social media is a unique educational tool due to its inherent dependence on interaction with others. Educators need to meet students where they live and integrate social media tools into their classrooms. Colleges and universities are using social media to advertise and recruit prospective students. Social media enable people in higher education to regularly communicate with various constituencies. They are now important spaces on the higher education landscape, affecting instruction, student services, individual students, and campus culture. They will improve learning outcomes [9]

Healthcare: Healthcare professional, including nurses, are increasingly using social media in professional practice, research, and personal lives. Social media can also improve patients’ access to health care information.

Journalism: Social media are used by journalists for several purposes. These include newsgathering, breaking news or broadcasting, generating or increasing an audience, engaging audience, enhancing reach, and generating traffic to news websites [10].

Job Hunting: Using social media is a good way to search for job. Taking advantage of social media sites can help one find companies hiring. Individuals looking for jobs can use LinkedIn to track specific companies, people, and job openings.

Other applications of social media include workplace, conflict management, professional sports, psychology, and future prediction.

V. CHALLENGES
Although social media can be beneficial, it has some challenges. Criticisms against social media include the disparity of information available, issues with trustworthiness, reliability of information shared, privacy, addiction, and ownership of media content.

Social media cause turbulence in our privacy; we engage in a large amount of privacy talk while sharing online. Social media challenge our perception of privacy as the boundaries between what is private and what is public become blurred [11].

Another major problem with social media is the rapid adoption of this medium by terrorists. Militant groups have started to use social media as a major tool for gathering information, promoting their cause, recruiting members, and raising funds.

The use of social media by young people has caused some problems. It causes distraction when students are in class. Educators and parents are fearful of the repercussions of having social media in the classroom because social media can be misused for cyberbullying or sharing inappropriate information.

Some have not been able to get a job because of their comments on social media websites. Facebook profile photos have some impact on hiring decisions.

VI. CONCLUSIONS
The social network revolution has led to the rise of the networking sites. Social media is becoming more and more important as social websites and applications proliferate. It is spreading so quickly because it allows us be ourselves. It is risky to underestimate the huge changes this revolution will bring on our lives.

Social media have become an indispensable part of life and they are to stay. More information about social media can be found [12, 13], free ebooks, and regular books available in Amazon.com. Information is also available in two journals devoted exclusively for SM: The Journal of Social Media in Society and Social Media + Society.

REFERENCES


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