

Does facebook keep us together or apart? essay sample

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Introduction

All over the world teenagers, students, yuppies, and even some adults casually ask each other to become friends. This may not have been anything noteworthy except that these questions are popped online through social networking sites. In recent years it had been made a lot easier to create online profiles, which can be considered personal web sites but with more features of interactivity between the owner and the rest of the members of the ever increasing virtual networks. Unfortunately, not all implications of its popularity had been encouraging, which merits an effort among all of us to engage in it with caution

This paper is an attempt to present and evaluate the effects of media on society; Facebook was particularly discussed as the case study. Online social networks were tackled in general and focus was directed at Facebook and its impact on its users and society as a whole.

There was no doubt as to the question of whether Facebook had succeeded in connecting people. It had indeed provided more avenues of socialization for people who otherwise would rather not interact with others personally. But the more important question raised was whether it make us take for granted our genuine needs and responsibilities. While we may have satisfied ourselves with wider connections and horizons, it is rather sad that to some extent it had led us to neglect the real value of reaching out and personally engaging with the rest of the community.

Description

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Online social networks are sites catering to anyone with internet access, allowing them to have an online profile describing themselves and their interests, and letting them opt to make it open to the public or limit its accessibility to them or their friends only. As quickly as they were introduced, social network sites such as Facebook, MySpace, Friendster, and Bebo have attracted users all over the world. Socializing through the internet has become an integral part of the lives of those who avail of these free services. There are actually hundreds of these sites, with varying technological affordances and the range of interests and practices they offer determining which of them appeal more to the public and survive.

Aside from these differences, there are a variety of subcultures that spring from each of these sites. Some cater to people who have long been actual friends, while others encourage their users to connect with strangers based on their interests, advocacies, or hobbies. Some limit their online communities according to race, gender, social class, or religious affiliations; still, others are open to diverse users.

Facebook originally catered to Harvard students only, then expanded to the student community in general and employees, and then opened its services to all internet users. It connects people with their friends and other users who study, work, or live around them. It allows for an uploading of personal information, photos or videos in an unlimited memory allotted.

Analysis

With the enormity of its reach and wider possible influences, it is thus important to examine its users' common practices, its implications and consequences, the subculture it might harness, and its overall impact on society.

One facet of Facebook's appeal is it gives everybody the opportunity to co-author the identity of their site. It allows them to present themselves in a variety of forms - text, photos, videos. The user's profile contains whatever personal information they want to share about them. This lets users project any kind of persona they may want to describe themselves. Other users who belong to the same "network" can view one's profile, unless he specifies otherwise.

Facebook also allows a user to post messages for others to read, upload photos and albums, and information regarding their whereabouts and activities. Other users who view someone's profile can likewise post a message into it. It further allows users to post essays, articles, journal entries or any piece of writing.

These features constitute a form of communication; to some extent, it mimics the way people correspond in the real world.

Interpretation

The basic premise of online social networks is that people have always and will continue to long for connections and interactions with others. As to the way they will achieve this and the degree of intimacy they experience is not

their primary concern. To some it wouldn't even matter with whom, strangers or otherwise, they will satisfy this need with.

Giving the user complete authority on how to present themselves online is another appealing concept of these sites. Taking advantage of this reflects one's reservations about himself. While withholding or manufacturing some information may encourage and perpetuate insecurities, it nevertheless is a form of social equalizer.

Multimedia additions to one's profile further allows for more interaction between users, minus the hassles of personal correspondence. It made exchanging photos, videos, articles and other files a lot easier.

Evaluation

Facebook had indeed enabled countless individuals to meet new people and reconnect with long lost friends. It provided an opportunity for us to try to introduce ourselves to the world, albeit virtual. To some it might have been the one that made them realize and acknowledge the value of interaction.

One concern raised against Facebook is the question of who are allowed to view one's profile. There had been rumors that some employers and school administrators use it to monitor employees and students. This also leads to problems about enabling complete strangers to gather personal information of users, which could be maliciously abused.

But what makes online social networks more appealing is not that they allow people to meet strangers, but rather that they help users express and make

public who they interact with. This often leads to people establishing connections between them that would not have been made through personal meetings. But these sites do not necessarily encourage “ networking” to meet new people; instead, users are more often than not communicating with people who are already a part of their personal circle of friends. Rather than virtual communities established online, these online networks are usually spurred and sustained by offline or personal relationships.

Conclusion

More important than the question of whether online social networks have succeeded in connecting people however is whether it has made us take for granted our genuine needs and responsibilities. There is no doubt as to the great opportunities that these sites have opened for us; these have certainly widened the horizon of those who would otherwise choose to stay within their comfort zones. But are these enough substitutes to our needs of physical interaction? Do these exempt us from our responsibilities as members of a larger community? Would we really rather occupy ourselves with these virtual networks than go out and engage and personally interact with others?

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