

Introduction freedom  
and autonomy to  
meet new



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## **Introduction**

The advent and spread of the computers brought many changes to the world. The first years of computers so their widespread adoption in military and learning institutions as they were considered efficient tools for information exchange. This era was characterized by less computer usage by the civilian population.

This was followed by another important period in the history of computers which saw mass adoption of these devices by the civilian population and the spread of computer networks (later coined “ internet”). It may be true to say that the Personal computer was the main catalyst for this change. The internet was quickly adopted by governments, businesses, and individuals as the preferred channel to communicate, educate, transact business or just for entertainment.

However, none of this uses took center stage position in the use of the internet. Since early 2000s, a new force has arisen; this force threatens to permeate every aspect of our lives. Be it business, relationship, profession, or leisure. This force is the social network and it is all about “ you” and your friends or “ followers” with friends updating each other about their daily activities. Facebook, Twitter, Myspace, Blackplanet, Classmate, Flicr, Flixster, Friendster, Hi5, LinkedIn, Multiply, MyYearBook, Perfspot (Blow, n. pag ) and tickle to mention just but a few are some of the popular social sites with millions of users. This papers discusses the significance of social networks on young people’s lives with specific focus on how it is influencing how they learn, relate and the challenges presented by this technological change.

## Uses

Social networks are very popular with young people within the age group of 13 to 25 (Blow, n. pag). These young people primarily use a host of social sites to establish new and maintain old friendships in a unique and non-physical way (Ito, n. p).

The social networks have given them a superb platform, complete with freedom and autonomy to meet new people, date and even marry online (Ito, n. p). Social networks give young people an opportunity to “ apply” for friendship from people they have even never met before or from persons they idolize and greatly admire.

Special qualities are not essential for one to win over a multitude of friends. To win over more friends it is common for these young people to lie about their height, weight, age, social status, relationship, history, habits among others in a bid to create an image of attractiveness about themselves (Blow, n. p). This may be difficult or impractical in real life but is not the case in “ online life”. Online users are tolerant toward some of these lies or simply care less about them (Blow n. p). The established friendships are sustained and maintained via constant chats, messaging or gaming services most social sites offer.

These efforts are privately augmented with communications such as instant messaging or mobile phones (Ito, n. pag). Social network networks are increasingly becoming a source of information for varying types of users. Young people are using them to research and further their interests in addition to learning new skills (Ito, n. pag). This may be through help from

reputed peers they meet through social networks or through shared resources (Ito, n. pag). On the other hand, professionals in many fields are also turning to social networks in order to extract personal or public information that may be of interest to them.

Hiring managers are using social networks data in screening potential employees (Havenstein, n. pag). As young people turn to social network to conform to the peer culture and look for information, few are aware of silent risks these networks expose them to.

The greatest risk is loss of privacy.

## **Risks**

Young people may inadvertently share private information in social networks. This may constitute drug use, inappropriate photos, former employer details, criminal behavior or qualifications details (Havenstein, n. pag). Unknown to them some people, such as hiring managers and ethnographic researchers are always snooping for such information. There is also a possibility that social network firms may leak private data to third parties without users consent Charles blow of New York Times presented “hard data” about behavioral traits of online users. What is clear is that most people give out fake details. This clearly shows that the art of deception rules in these networks. For gullible users, the results could be disastrous: broken heart, financial loss, injured reputation to mention just but a few. While the social network offers young people ready information on whatever topic of interest, the nature of the information is such that its quality and effects cannot be ascertained (Ito, n.

pag). Despite this fact, some like Ito Mizuko, a research scientist in the department of informatics at the University of California have been quick to claim that literacy offered online by say, social networks is just as good as traditional classroom institutions. These risks however are minor compared to a host of benefits social networks present to users.

## **Benefits**

Social networks certainly offer a wide array of benefits to their young users. They give users freedom to experiment on various interests using vast resource online and in the process acquire “ technical and media literacy” (Ito, n. pag). Such networks are also good marketing as users can distribute their work at a cheap cost through them assured of feedback from their peers (Ito n.

pag). Social network users can also take the opportunity of adoption of such networks by corporation which are their possible future employers. As pointed out by Havenstein it is important that users portray themselves as “ hireable” in these networks because their next employer may be “ watching”. Unemployed users are advised to update their profile with “ latest accomplishments” (Havenstein, n.

pag). Social networks can also be effectively used to complement classroom learning. Expert peers can be offer quality help to novice users thus facilitating understanding. Social networks also present ethnographic researches with good source of harvest study data. This however should be undertaken with users consent.

## **Legislation**

The issue of privacy is a concern to many social network users. To this end, user privacy protection laws need to be enacted and implemented. This is to ensure that rogue social network firms do not divulge sensitive data to third parties for a profit. The data should not be used without the user consent. Users also need to be educated about online privacy.

This can be achieved for example by enabling “ friends only” setting in one’s account (Havenstein, n. pag). Education policies formulators can also not afford to ignore social networks bearing in mind their popularity and use by young learners. The adoption of social networks in learning calls for new definition and acknowledgement of its role in education.

(Ito, n. pag).

## **Conclusion**

It is without doubt that social networks are changing the lives of many users who constantly use them. Popular uses for social networks include connecting with new and old friends and as a medium for learning and furthering personal interests. All these require personal efforts to succeed. Many organizations have also started using social networks data in workers management and recruitment.

The popularity of social networks has also come with new challenges such as privacy violation. The credibility of information online is questionable as most studies indicate. Apart from such limitations social networks offer user a good platform to learn new skill through personal supervision in addition to availing the freedom to experiment. Policy makers can also learn from these <https://assignbuster.com/introduction-freedom-and-autonomy-to-meet-new/>

dynamic changes and come up with legislations that are in harmony with these technological changes

## **Works Cited**

\*Customer indicated no need for works cited references as he already wrote them.