

The Future of Social Media: Trends, Challenges and Societal Impact

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the future of social media related to current arising trends, tenacious challenges and intense societal impacts. The paper based on narrative review to explore all positive and negative consequences of social media. Social media has speedily encompassed simple to complex interaction and become omnipresent system over worldwide. Primary trends comprise short-form video, rise of authentic data and decentralization. Minute observation of difficulties and social effects examined through societal separation and change in communication reflects how technology reforms our social connections? Results indicate that social media trends have reshaped global communication, information sharing, and social interaction. These platforms have enabled people to connect, express themselves, and participate in worldwide conversations. However, they also present serious concerns such as the spread of false information, threats to personal privacy, psychological stress, and growing societal divisions. The fast-paced nature of online trends can increase pressure (particularly among young users) to stay constantly engaged. Additionally, the worldwide reach of social media introduced complex ethical, cultural, and legal issues. Tackling these problems demands a well-rounded response that includes promoting digital education, implementing effective policies, encouraging responsible platform development, and raising user awareness. To fully benefit from social media's potential, the world must work together to reduce its harms and ensure it becomes a force for unity, knowledge, and progress.

Keywords: *Social Media, Trends, Challenges, Societal Impact*

Technology is the application of scientific knowledge to attain practical purposes and make human life easy. It is combining tools, machine, system and device especially in a productive way to make things easy. Over the period of time, technology has developed simple to complex digital machines which helped and transformed human life entirely. Thinking about Technology it brings many things in mind, for example laptop, phone and tablet and transportation devices, on which human life depends on these devices so much. As far as social media is concern, it is deeply interconnected with technology.

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Social media refers to digital tool that permits user to create, share and interact with others and with content. In 21st century, social media has completely changed every human life. Extensive use of social media raised grave concern among adolescents and young adults. It is characterized by obsessive use of social media site adverse effect on overall health function. Social media platform like as Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram and X have transformed to way of communication, collaboration and access information in real time. Social media is not only communication medium but also treated as cultural, political, social and economic influential stage. Some platform viz. LinkedIn, Snapchat and X connect people globally. Currently, use of social media is very prominent in various sectors like education, advertising, entertainment and public relation. Future of social media will be bit complex for researchers, technology developers and policymaker. Social media is transformed from digital meeting to becoming effective platform for some people to showcase themselves in such a way that they are being able to influence other people's opinion and thoughts. On average, approximately 5.79 billion people use social media per day worldwide in 2026 (Statista, 2026). Future of social media is more likely to rapidly involve in AI integration, personalisation and RI (real intelligence) etc. In future, social media will not be simple communication podium that is almost convert into virtual world, because with help of internet, individuals would become more capable to perform task or activities with minimum efforts and cost. As technology develops, the nature of social media will also change accordingly.

Technology and social media both are deeply interconnected, because social media also depend on technology tools, for example Artificial Intelligence and large data sheet. In the present time internet tool is direct result of advance technology. The reason of social media rise is smartphone and digital communication app that laid the foundation for theses platform- Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter and TikTok among billion of people all across the world. All tools/application operated through complex software program supported by hardware system and provide entire world connectivity. Smartphone has made social media extra accessible into each and everyday life. Nowadays, Individual can easily exchange and share photo, video content, experiences and thoughts instantly from anywhere any time in the world. Evolution of high-speed internet, wireless communication and cloud computing has made things possible which provided the ecosystem and environment for developer to innovate new application for users to interact in real time basis. Few implications of use of social media apps are cyberbullying, misinformation FOMO and privacy issues.

Emerging Trends of social media

At Present, social media has defined new pattern, practice and technology that are redesigning human behaviour in different ways, especially youth. These trends formed by user demands, market dynamics and advance technology and social change. These trends are mostly important for researchers, users and marketers to stay in a quickly evolving in digital world. Some social media trends following in current era are given below.

Short Videos

Today, short term videos are rapidly runout everywhere because video is easily consumed and viewer engage speedily. Site like as TikTok, Instagram Reel, YouTube shorts and many others are constantly involving and making favourable to the content's creators and at the same time, it is seen that it represses contents viewers for long time involvement, because viewer didn't realize their worth only focus on immediate desire and need to consume the content, therefore such set-ups decrease attention span and enhanced mobile usages (Wang, et

al., 2025). According to Statista (2024) reports 95% of 'Gen Z' generation used social media and approximately 97% watched online short-term video contents.

Rise of Social media addiction

Addiction to internet is considered as a behavioural kind of addiction. Social media platforms have become more common and the regularly user spends several hours a day scrolling through news feeds, shorts, reels, commenting, and engaging with posts. This leads to anxiety lack of focus, and less time for real-life interaction. Continuous experience and exposure are related to a range of mental health and physical problem, including increased feelings of depression, nervousness, and low self-esteem and reduce concentration and inner peace (Al-Samarraie, et al., 2022).

AI and Personalization

Artificial intelligence is key to personalization which is used across the world. It is process of artificial intelligence to tailor user to knowledge based on person needs and desires. AI-driven content curation, fillets and chat box are changing experience. Hyper personalised content feeds are using through AI. How algorithm recommends reels, post and ads so on based on particular user's scrolling habits. On these sites, users engage for longer time and enhance the relevance of products such as industries like marketing, entertainment and training and education etc (McKinsey & Company, 2024).

Rise of "Authentic" Content

Nowadays, users demand raw, real post and unfiltered experience over the highlight reels. People want to see real Instagram news, story and blogs without curated trending filters. Authentic contents focus on transparency, genuineness and real persona rather than perfection of contents. It built strong connection between user and audience. Most of persons showcase or promote their products and ads through these platforms (Varricchio, 2023).

Decentralized Platforms

Social media network works without any central controlling entity, instead, it relies on multiple servers and nodes make it decentralized system. Decentralized protocol like Maston and Lens protocol are basically decentralized protocol on which all social media sites works and it is gaining popularity as substitute to centralized system such as Facebook, Instagram and X because this application controlled by another company but decentralised and block-chain system enhance data ownership, transparency and control over the contents. It aims to empower user by giving their right to data, privacy, earning and expression rather than connecting people (La Cava, et al., 2023).

Challenges of social media

Social media has become one of the strongest tools for communication, collaboration, access information and also comes with many physical, psychological and social challenges. Social media companies take charge to address to self-centred tendency to empower platform. It provides many more benefits like as global connectivity, content creation and built community. By addressing these matters offers coincident challenge, conscious use social media site and algorithm. But its present countless severe problem as social comparison, sedentary life style, detached from reality, phone addiction and risk of self-harm that affects individual mental health as well as impacts worldwide. Below the mention some Major challenge related to internet based social media.

Misinformation or Fake News

Misinformation or False news is considered as fake news. Due to internet, any misinformation, rumors and conspiracy can widespread quickly. With the help of social media, several users and persons created fake news and spread it all apps unlike factual contents. During pandemic, virus origin and vaccine security spread widely regarding of individual health (Vosoughi, 2018). Without any confirmation news are viral on media channels that Cause of social disruption (Wardle et al., 2017). Some social media users intentionally fabricate and falsification (text, audio and video) contents, which to fact checked either by govt or by social media platform which debunk such myth.

Mental health problems

After long use of internet sites which also include social media site which has been somewhat connected with mental and physical problems, for example- anxiety, stress, depression, low self-esteem, loneliness and feeling of detachment from the real world and comes from many more physical issues that impact daily life functions like sleep disruption, eye itching and lack of attention span. Emerging young youth and adult are very sensitive for using these app but involve frequently and compare his/ her life idealized to digital media and being live a virtual world and disconnects to real life interactions by which it decreases the wellness level of young people (Shychuk, et al., 2022).

Cyberbullying and harassment

In recent time, cyberbullying has become serious and pervasive concern across the world. Use of online persons treat, embarrass, harass and target someone else. If the people spend lots of time on internet, it increases the possibility to victim of internet media addiction. Habitually lacks of control to avoid trolling, harassment, bullying through use of electronic device. Behind screen to understand the most powerful compare to offline. Create fake account and share or post fake video clip and mopped picture to treat and bullying someone (most of women are victim). This can countlessly impact victim's overall functioning (Vogels, 2021).

Reduce productivity

People regularly spend hours scrolling by reels, shorts and newsfeed on online that are reduce individual's personal and professional responsibilities. Because social media has changed person's life dramatically, it leads, to habitual use to addiction and it can decrease focus, output and real-life connection and liabilities. They don't realize wasting of precious time and neglect academic work and health. Unfortunately, digital connectivity can directly affect low level of production process to many causes of low motivation; high engage in virtual, poor time management etc. extreme involvement of online (Andreassen, 2015).

Culture homogenization

Present time, western culture promotes their cultural norms and westerns values globally by using social media platforms. These western trends suppress our own local culture, custom, language and traditions which are now slowly decaying indigenous cultural, because people tend to follow western rule and regulation and living a life according to western norms. Through the media, television and internet, individual is exposed to different cultural language, ideology and way of living life. Social media is breaking all barriers and offering a platform where diverse ideology, culture and identity can be expressed freely (Marwick, 2013).

Societal impact of social media

Now, social media is playing a very dynamic role in society since it has reformed society each and every aspect of communication, education, business and entertainment. Today, people can connect almost instantly, access information easily and make relation across the global. While it carries huge benefits in the term of teaching, connectivity with others, empowerment and self-learning, it touches overall aspect of life such as political, cultural and toward to relationship.

Internet has deeply affected communities and bringing both positive and negative outcomes. Due to internet, education system is accessible online which is reachable for all student lives in underprivileged and deprived and even remote area. During Covid-19 pandemic, education activities were hit the most. That time, social media play significant part to providing education millions of students through online class via e- learning, YouTube videos, podcast and blogs etc. however, it also introduces some major online issue like as privacy, trolling, fake news and over screen time which led social isolation, separation and loneliness.

Change in Communication

Social media has entirely changed the way of how an individual's communication and interaction with another and breaks the geographical boundaries. Nowadays, people can connect daily and share or interchange their own unique ideas, perception, viewpoint and day to day life style and activities. However, virtual communities such as Twitter, LinkedIn and reddit these provides very fast global connectivity, it also supports or help deprived communities and groups to connect with online to share interest, and make their original identity (LGBTQA⁺ group) (Hampton, et a 2011).

Increased social awareness and accessibility

Social media has made person more aware and consciousness as well as easy access to information in any context ever before. Now, user is able to know various social issues- climate change and government schemes or any movement in real time and it help spread awareness regarding to public health and ecological problem. It has popularized by creating, sharing and exchange contents through Facebook, YouTube and Instagram channels, since these are mutually integrated and accessible which breaks down all barrier with regards to people disabilities and confirm equal participation in online interaction. It facilitates inclusive content study (Shirky, 2011).

Impact in youth well- being

Social media provides immense opportunities to youth along with many complex challenges. While, it can facilitate foster connectivity, creativity, novel ideas and digital information. As unconscious use of internet tools affects individual academic performance and reduces well-being, which is compulsion to check notification, status and profile and user wants to be up to date with social media posts. Youth triggered by impulsive urge to log-in social media most of the time, this repetitive activity impact others action and they suffer various problem in term of reduce morale, low self-esteem and disconnect to real world (Twenge, 2017). Internet tools YouTube and TikTok offer to express individual's ideas, originality and talents to create personal accounts and earn money (Livingstone, 2008).

CONCLUSION

In present era, future of social media plays a double-edge role in individual and communities. However, it has become indispensable tools everyone's life. This has been permitting plentiful chance in term of alertness, making global connection and easily reachable

academic sector. Yet, filled with many challenges as privacy and security concern, addiction, health related anxiety, bullying and trolling etc. Whereas, these trends are reprogramming and redefining person's experience and factual knowledge through AI personalization, block chain-based platform and immersive technology. Although, societal effects will reshape culture, business, relationship and lifestyle settings. If addressing all Major problems to social media, main goal of built strong connectivity, advance technology user and mitigate online challenges and issues. By which individuals can do productive, creative and profitable work with less efforts and cost.

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Conflict of Interest

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