Facebook is in the middle of a soul-searching exercise.

In a little more than a decade, a website launched by a group of Harvard students in their college dorm has become a global leviathan in social media and networking.

But along with its amazing growth came the realization that the company has become too big for comfort. It has become a major force in the world, but its managers cannot fully control its influence and impact on society.

Facebook, for example, has acknowledged that it had allowed itself to be used as a vehicle for spreading false news, which could very well have had an impact on the results of the 2016 presidential elections in the United States.

It is now overhauling its News Feed to make it more appealing and relevant to users.

But what is worse, as far as its financial outlook and even long-term relevance are concerned, is that Facebook appears to be falling out of favor among youngsters and so-called millennials – those born in the mid-1990s and early 2000s.

A growing number of these young people have drastically reduced their dependence on Facebook, if they have not stopped using it altogether. They have turned to other platforms, such as Instagram – Facebook’s sister company – and Snapchat, to socialize and communicate with each other.

Interestingly, even Snapchat recently suffered a backlash from its young users after it redesigned its app and started using its own algorithm that seems to be filtering out content in ways that users don’t like.

According to market research firm eMarketer, for the first time, less than half of US internet users aged 12 to 17 are expected to use Facebook via any device at least once per month this year.

The researcher also forecasts that the number of US Facebook users aged 11 and younger will decline by 9.3 percent this year from 2017. The number of those aged 12 to 17 and 18 to 24 will decrease by 5.6 percent and 5.8 percent, respectively. All in all, Facebook will lose 2 million users aged 24 and younger this year.

On the other hand, eMarketer sees Instagram adding 1.6 million users aged 24 and younger and Snapchat increasing the number of users from the same age group by 1.9 million during the year.

So while Facebook is predicted to continue to grow the number of its users from older age brackets, Instagram and Snapchat would be in keen competition for those aged 24 or younger.

So why do youngsters seem to prefer Snapchat over Facebook? The most probable reason is that they don’t want their parents to be nosing around on social media, making uncalled-for advice and remarks when they are communicating with their friends.

Recently, Snapchat launched a new user interface, which aims to separate sponsored content from communications with friends. But the app uses its own algorithm that filters content on the assumption that it knows what users care about most.

Such an arrangement simply repeated the fault made by Facebook. And so, in an unprecedented move, about half a million Snapchat users joined an online petition urging the social media service to return to its old and simple user interface.

Social network users, especially the young ones, don’t want their choices to be limited by an impersonal, non-human algorithm that tries to decide for them what they want to read on their accounts.

They also don’t want to receive too many ads, or sponsored content, even if it’s these ads that allow them to continue to use the platform.

Youngsters prefer advertisements that enter their accounts in a more low-profile manner, not like on Facebook where sponsored posts mingle with the users’ personal posts.

Many millennials now see Facebook as an information hub rather than a place for friends to share intimate moments and experiences in private. They also like platforms that focus on visuals.

In short, they want a social media platform that they can control, and not under the power of some algorithm or AI that decides what they should read.

Young people are moving away from Facebook because they hate the algorithm behind the app. They are also beginning to dislike Snapchat for the same reason.

In fact, if Facebook and Snapchat are unable to settle such issues, more and more youngsters will prefer using Instagram, where they can use pictures and videos to convey their feelings and experiences and where they have power over filters and other controls.

Basically, what they want is freedom on the internet, freedom from the control of robots and the prying eyes of parents.