Project Report on

Use of Social Media vs Invasion of Privacy

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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

Date: 30 April, 2024

Respected Ma'am,

This is to inform you that we are submitting our report entitled "Use of Social Media vs Invasion of Privacy" as partial fulfillment of the Professional Communication Course (UHU005) requirement.

This report examines the tradeoff between the facilities provided by social media and the risks associated with it. In addition, the following report also highlights the factors that influence the users to stick to such applications. Further, interacting with people, interrogating them, and conclusively knowing their thoughts shaped the survey.

Through this report and survey conducted, we intend to bring into the limelight, people's perspectives on both utility and privacy. Considering the need that social media plays a crucial role in one's life, we conducted this survey and published our findings in this report.

Most Sincerely

Madhav Goyal (102115107)

Brinda Kaul (102115114)

Abhinandan Sethi (102165022)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the project report on **'Use of Social Media vs Invasion of Privacy'** is a bonafide project work done originally by **Madhav Goyal (102115107), Brinda Kaul (102115114), Abhinandan Sethi (102165022)** in fulfillment of the project work given by the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology during the year 2024.

Ms Rishita Goyal

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

At the outset, we consider this report on the topic "Use of Social Media vs Invasion of Privacy" as a small journey that was a remarkable learning experience. The combined effort, skill and time devotion of all the members made the completion of this project possible.

We would like to express our gratitude to our professor **Ms Rishita Goyal** for her extraordinary support and guidance throughout the project. The deep insights into the subject given to us by her helped us in completing this project qualitatively and timely.

We are also grateful to all the faculty members in the Department. We are proud to be the students of the department and grateful to be a student of Thapar University, Patiala. Our heartfelt appreciation goes to our interviewees who took time out of their busy schedules for participating in this research**.**

INTRODUCTION

In today's digital age, the use of social media platforms has become deeply ingrained in our daily lives. However, this widespread adoption of social media comes with a significant trade-off: the invasion of privacy. Despite being aware of the risks to their privacy and the exploitation of their personal data by corporations, individuals continue to use these platforms because the benefits provided by these applications outweigh the risks and vulnerabilities.

Social media includes personal and sensitive information that people can find out from user accounts. This information is shared voluntarily through posts and profile information and may also be released unknowingly through tracking cookies, which track the information of a user's online activity. Companies profit immensely from the collection and monetization of user data, often without explicit consent or understanding from the users themselves.

It's essential to be aware of the potential privacy risks and to know how to protect users' personal information. People are becoming more careful about their privacy, what they share on social media, and what social platforms do with their social media data. The concern of privacy among the users of these applications has spiked in recent years due to incidents of data breaches and the forced rethinking of relationships to social media and the security of personal information.

This dilemma reflects a complex interplay of factors, including the convenience and social connectivity offered by these platforms, as well as the normalization of sharing personal information in exchange for access to services and content. Additionally, there is a sense of resignation or helplessness among users, who feel they have little control over their digital privacy in an increasingly interconnected world.

Efforts to address this issue have been met with varying degrees of success, from regulatory measures aimed at increasing transparency and accountability to individual actions such as adjusting privacy settings. However, achieving a balance between the benefits of social media and the protection of privacy remains a formidable challenge.

In conclusion, the use of social media presents a paradox where individuals willingly engage

with platforms that pose risks to their privacy. Addressing this issue requires a multifaceted approach that considers technological, regulatory, and societal factors to ensure that individuals can enjoy the benefits of social connectivity without compromising their fundamental right to privacy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Whiting, A. and Williams, D. (2013)

This paper applies uses and gratifications theory to understand why consumers use social media. The authors conducted an exploratory study with 25 in-depth interviews to identify the uses and gratifications that consumers receive from using social media. The literature review covers the definition of social media, the relevance of uses and gratifications theory in understanding media usage, and the common themes identified in previous uses and gratifications research, such as social interaction, information seeking, passing time, entertainment, relaxation, communicatory utility, and convenience utility. The authors then present their findings, identifying ten uses and gratifications for social media usage, including social interaction, information seeking, passing time, entertainment, relaxation, expression of opinions, communicatory utility, convenience utility, information sharing, and surveillance/knowledge about others. The paper contributes to the literature by demonstrating the applicability of uses and gratifications theory to social media research and providing a comprehensive understanding of why consumers use social media.

Brandtzæg, P.B., Heim, J. (2009)

This paper investigates people's motivations for using social networking sites (SNSs) by conducting a large-scale quantitative and qualitative study with 1,200 SNS users in Norway. The authors asked participants an open-ended question about their reasons for using SNSs and performed a content analysis on the responses. The literature review covers the definition of SNSs, the lack of previous research on user motivations for SNS usage, and the relevance of uses and gratifications (U&G) theory in understanding media usage motivations. The authors identified 12 different reasons for using SNSs, with the top three being to get in contact with new people (31%), keep in touch with friends (21%), and general socializing (14%). The findings fit well with the four main motivational needs proposed by U&G theory: information, entertainment, social interaction, and personal identity. The paper contributes to the literature by empirically investigating user motivations for SNS usage, especially from a European perspective, and demonstrating the applicability of U&G theory in understanding social media usage.

Barnes, S. B. (2006)

The paper discusses the privacy paradox that arises with the popularity of social networking

sites, where teenagers freely share personal information online but are later surprised when that information becomes public. The literature review covers the shift from personal relationships to mediated communication and organizational control processes described by Beniger (1986), who argued that higher levels of social organization require expanded information collection and processing mechanisms. The paper situates social networking sites within this larger trend of mediated communication and information sharing. While the literature review is brief, it provides relevant background on how the rise of information societies and communication technologies has blurred the boundaries between private and public spheres, setting the stage for the privacy paradox around social networking that the paper aims to explore.

Hargittai, E., & Marwick, A. (2016)

This paper investigates the "privacy paradox" - the phenomenon where people claim to value privacy but share personal information online. The literature review discusses previous research on the privacy paradox, highlighting potential explanations such as lack of risk awareness, lack of privacy skills, and the social benefits of self-disclosure. The authors note that earlier studies focused primarily on college students, associating the paradox with young people's enthusiasm for social media.The authors argue that previous operationalization of "online information provision" as a lack of privacy concern is problematic, as young people may not view sharing personal information on social media as a privacy risk. The literature review also covers the concepts of networked privacy, where individuals' ability to control their personal information is compromised by others' actions, and the role of Internet skills in privacy-protective behaviors.

Alashoor, Tawfiq and Baskerville, Richard (2015)

The literature review delves into the complex relationship between social media use and the invasion of user privacy, focusing on two main areas: the privacy concerns arising from Social Network Sites (SNS) and the dynamics of self-disclosure. It highlights the paradox where users continue to share personal information extensively despite significant privacy concerns due to the extensive data collection and potential misuse by SNS providers. This contradiction is explored through the lens of privacy calculus theory, suggesting that users weigh the benefits against the risks before sharing personal information. However, this doesn't fully explain why users still overshare, leading the authors to introduce the concept of cognitive absorption as a potential underlying factor driving this privacy paradox. By examining how users' engrossment with SNS can override privacy concerns, the review offers a fresh theoretical perspective on the intricate

interplay between privacy apprehensions and online self-disclosure behaviors.

Fandia Purwaningtyas, M. P. (2019)

The research conducted by Barnes (2006) and Lunt & Livingstone (1992) delves into the intricate dynamics of social interactions and media influence in contemporary society. Barnes (2006) explores the complex relationships between individuals within various social networks, emphasizing the importance of understanding these connections for a deeper insight into human behavior. On the other hand, Lunt & Livingstone (1992) focus on the role of media in shaping public perceptions and its significant impact on societal norms and values. Both studies collectively highlight the intertwined nature of social structures and media, suggesting that to comprehend the nuances of social interactions fully, one must consider the pervasive influence of media. These works contribute valuable perspectives to the discourse on the sociocultural implications of media and social networking, offering insights essential for both academic and practical applications in understanding and navigating the social landscape shaped by evolving media dynamics.

Aksoy, M. E. (2018)

Recent research highlights a significant concern among users, particularly young people, about their privacy and how their data is shared without their consent. This issue is well-documented, with studies by the Pew Research Center & Berkman Center in 2013 and the Ponemon Institute in 2015 showing widespread apprehension about the lack of control over personal information. Despite these concerns, there's a paradox in user behavior. According to a study by van der Velden & El Emam in 2012, even with an awareness of the risks involved, some are still willing to share personal information. This contradiction underscores a complex relationship between the desire for privacy and the perceived benefits of sharing data. It raises important questions about how consent is understood and managed in the digital age, suggesting a need for more transparent and user-centered data practices.

## Loiacono, E.T., McCoy, S. (2014)

The study explores the dynamics of social media engagement through a model derived from the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), focusing on the interplay between beliefs, norms, and control factors in shaping continued usage intentions. TRA

suggests that attitudes toward behavior and subjective norms guide behavioral intentions, while TPB introduces perceived behavioral control as a crucial factor. The research hypothesizes connections between perceived usefulness, subjective norms, self-efficacy, and attitudes toward ongoing social media use. It posits that beliefs about usefulness (H1a, H1b) and subjective norms (H2a, H2b) positively affect attitudes and intentions to continue using social media. Additionally, it explores how self-efficacy (H3a, H3b) influences these attitudes and intentions, culminating in the proposal that positive attitudes (H4) significantly drive the intentions for sustained social media activity. This framework dissects the motivations behind persistent engagement and technology acceptance in the social media landscape.

Mingli Liu, Aixia Zhuang, Jill M. Norvilitis, Tian Xiao (2024)

The rise of social media has significantly impacted how we connect and share information, offering new avenues for communication and self-expression. Despite these benefits, concerns over privacy have intensified as users increasingly share personal data. Social media platforms, driven by the business model of surveillance capitalism, collect vast amounts of data through tracking online behaviors, often without clear user consent, as outlined by Zuboff (2019) and others. This practice has led to criticism for exploiting personal data for profit. Research indicates a gap between users' understanding of data collection practices and their desire for privacy (Park, 2013; Mothersbaugh et al., 2012). High-profile data misuse incidents, such as the Facebook-Cambridge Analytica scandal, highlight the risks of such practices, including potential for manipulation and threats to free expression. Critics advocate for more ethical, consent-based data handling models, challenging the notion that privacy must be sacrificed for digital services. The ongoing debate suggests a need for better privacy protections in social media, including both technical solutions and legal reforms to ensure user data is handled responsibly and transparently.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
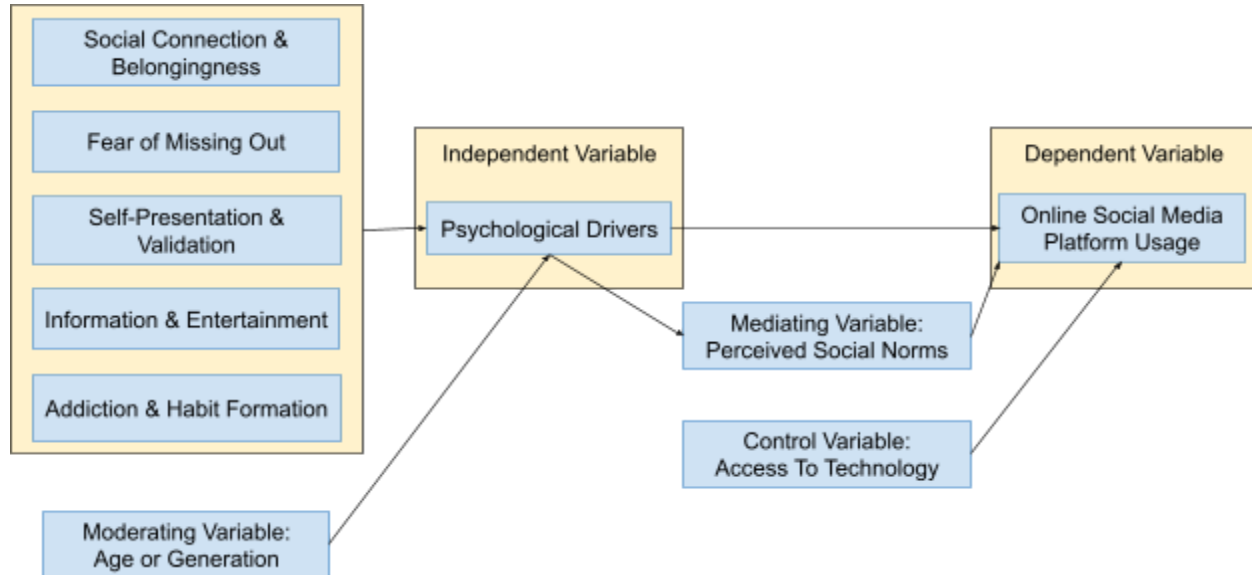
SCOPE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This report explores the relationship between the widespread use of social media and the invasion of privacy. The study delves into the ways in which social media platforms collect, store, and monetize user data, and examines the risks and vulnerabilities associated with sharing personal information online. The report also investigates the complex interplay of factors that contribute to the paradox of individuals willingly engaging with platforms that pose risks to their privacy.

The significance of this report lies in its ability to provide a comprehensive understanding of the trade-offs between the benefits of social media and the risks to individual privacy. The report's findings will be crucial in informing strategies for protecting personal information and promoting transparency and accountability in the collection and use of user data. By raising awareness about privacy risks, informing policy and regulatory measures, empowering individuals, and promoting a balanced approach, this report aims to contribute to the ongoing conversation about the importance of protecting individual privacy. Ultimately, the report seeks to ensure that individuals can enjoy the benefits of social connectivity without compromising their fundamental right to privacy.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To explore the complex interplay of factors contributing to the paradox of individuals willingly engaging with platforms that pose risks to their privacy, and to identify strategies for protecting personal information and promoting transparency and accountability in the collection and use of user data.

- To examine the relationship between social media use and invasion of privacy, including identifying the types of personal information collected by social media platforms and how they are used, and investigating the risks and vulnerabilities associated with sharing personal information online.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods to explore the paradox of privacy on social media. A Google Forms survey was designed to gather people's views and attitudes towards social media use and privacy concerns. The survey consisted of 20 questions, including multiple-choice and Likert scale. The survey was divided into 2 sections: (1) social media usage and behavior, and (2) attitudes towards privacy and data sharing.

The survey was designed to ensure participant anonymity and confidentiality. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and their consent was obtained prior to completing the survey. The survey did not collect any personally identifiable information, and all data were stored securely in accordance with institutional data protection policies. A total of [insert number] responses were collected over a period of [insert time frame]. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the quantitative data, including frequencies, percentages, and means. The mixed-methods approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the paradox of privacy on social media, providing both quantitative insights into people's behaviors and attitudes, as well as qualitative insights into their perceptions and experiences

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

1. *Despite concerns about privacy on social media, I still continue using these platforms because it connects me with friends and family*

Disagree 7.3%
Neutral 18.8%
Strongly Agree 17.7%
Agree 56.2%
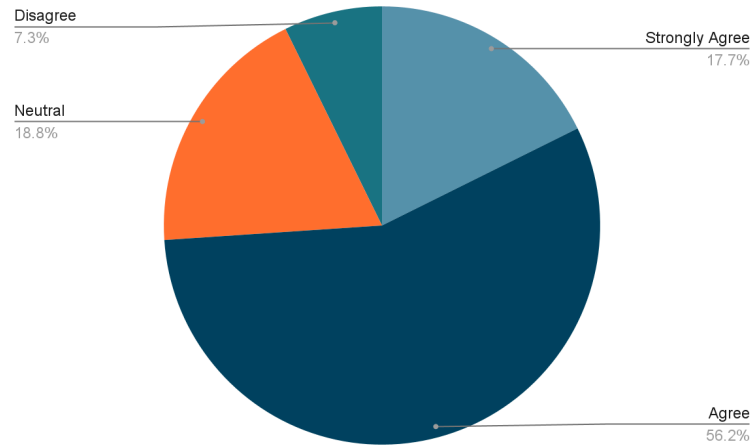
Interpretation

- Almost 60% of the respondents still use these platforms to connect with their friends and family.
- 50% respondents use these platforms because they are habitual to it.
- 58% of the respondents use these applications for news and information despite the concerns about privacy.

2. *I have explored alternative social media platforms that prioritize privacy*

Strongly Disagree 1.9%
Disagree 26.9%
Strongly Agree 9.6%
Agree 19.2%
Neutral 42.3%
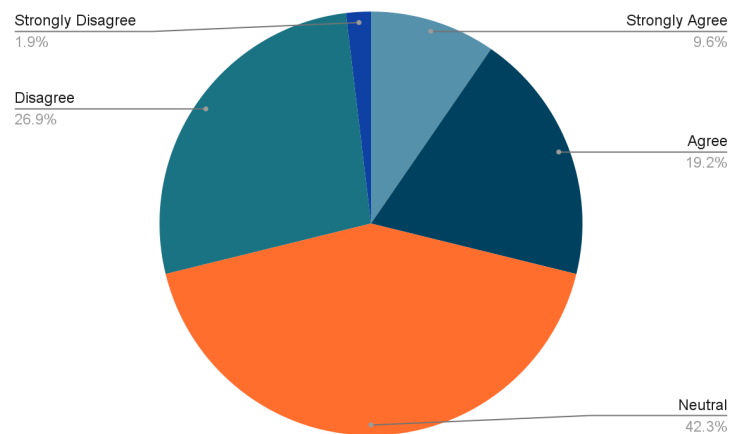
Interpretation

- 80% of the people who took the survey haven't explored alternative social media platforms.
- The remaining people have tried using such alternatives but failed to switch.
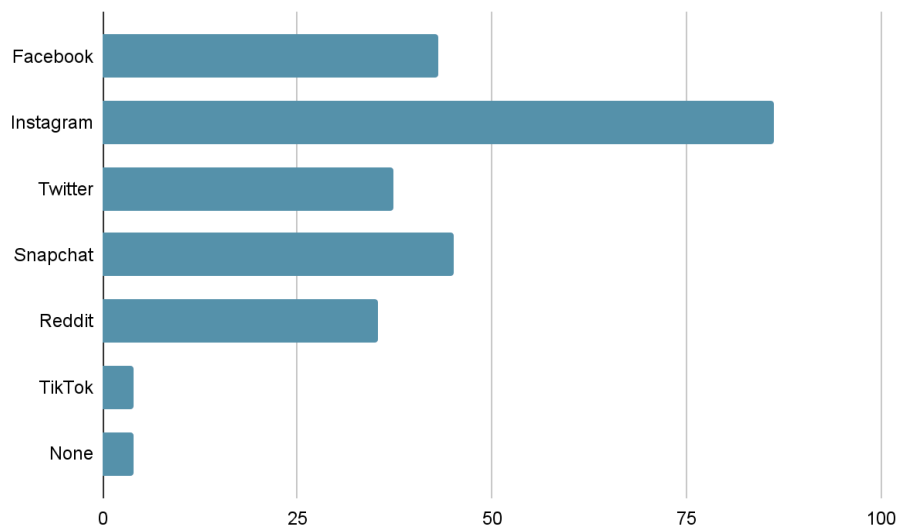
3. *The factors that prevent me from making a switch to alternative social media platforms that prioritize privacy*
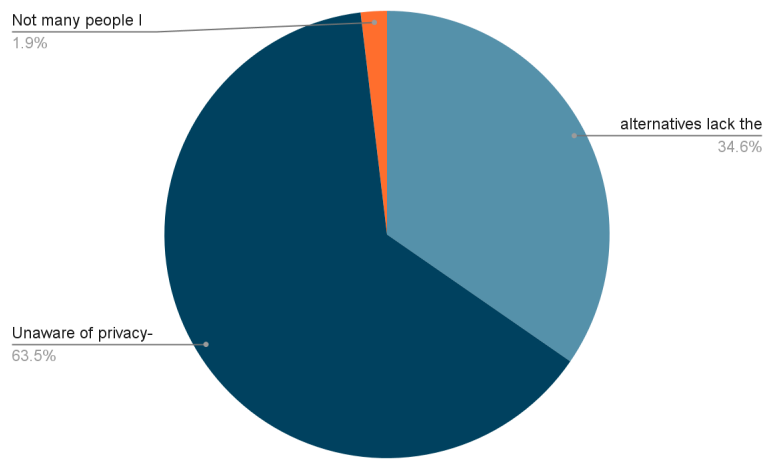
Interpretation

● 64% people are unaware of the privacy-focused alternatives
● 35% feel that the alternatives they tried don't have all the necessary features.

4. *What social media apps do people use?*

Interpretation

● 64% people are unaware of the privacy-focused alternatives
● 35% feel that the alternatives they tried don't have all the necessary features.
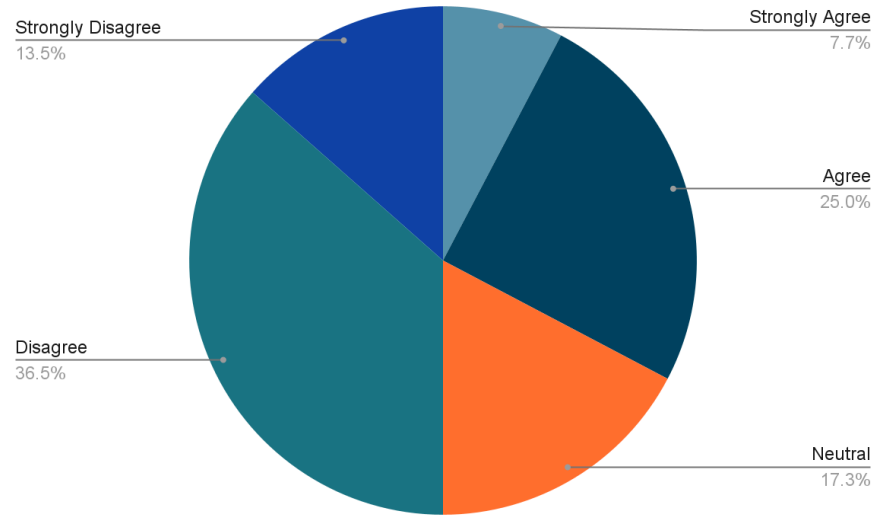
5. How many people actually read the privacy policies?

Interpretation

- 50% of people ignore the privacy policies of the apps.
- Only 30% of the remaining respondents read the policies before signing up.

6. The percentage of people that have adjusted the privacy settings of social media accounts?
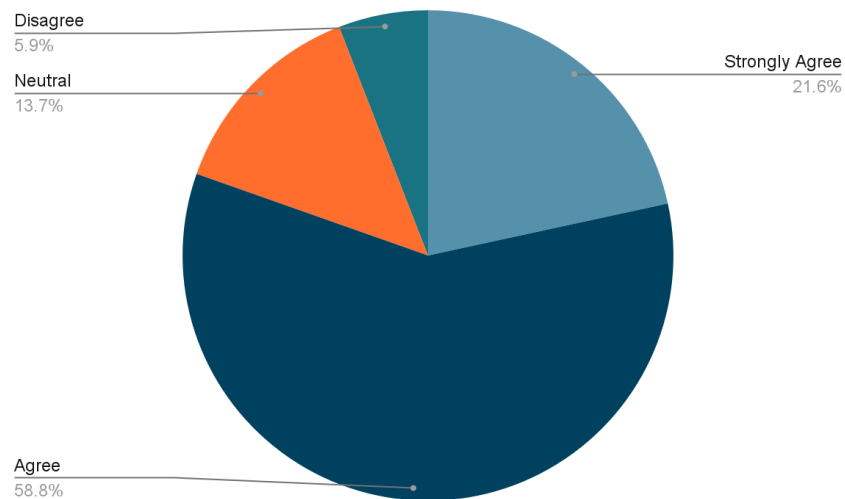
Interpretation

- 80% of people have adjusted the settings to safeguard their interests.
- Very few respondents have not explored such settings.

7.I have experienced targeted advertising based on my online activity?

Strongly Disagree
1.9%
Disagree
3.8%
Neutral
9.6%

Strongly Agree
48.1%

Agree
36.5%
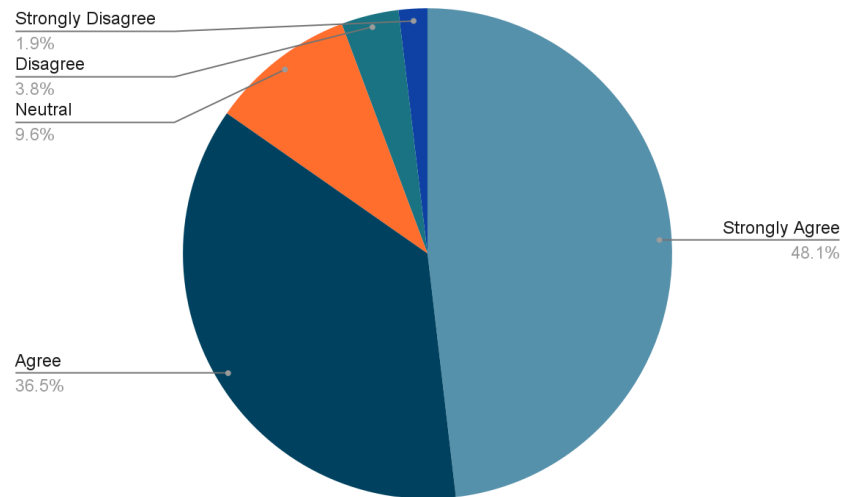
Interpretation

- 84.6% of people have experienced targeted advertisements.
- Very few respondents have not experienced targeted advertisements.

KEY FINDINGS

1.**Social Media Usage is a Complex Behavior:** Despite concerns about privacy, almost 60% of respondents still use social media to connect with friends and family. Additionally, 50% of respondents use social media because they are habitual to it, suggesting that habits play a significant role in shaping behavior.

2.**Awareness and Education are Key to Privacy:** The findings highlight the importance of awareness and education about privacy-focused alternatives. Only 20% of respondents have explored alternative social media platforms that prioritize privacy, and 64% of respondents are unaware of these alternatives. This suggests that users need to be more aware of the available options and take steps to protect their privacy.

3.**Design Matters: Privacy-Friendly Design is Essential:** The findings suggest that users are taking steps to protect their privacy, with 80% of respondents having adjusted their privacy settings to safeguard their interests. However, 35% of respondents feel that alternative social media platforms don't have all the necessary features, highlighting the need for privacy-friendly design in social media platforms.

4.**Targeted Advertising is a Reality:** The findings indicate that targeted advertising is a widespread phenomenon, with 84.6% of respondents having experienced targeted advertisements. This suggests that users need to be more aware of the potential risks associated with targeted advertising and take steps to protect their online privacy.

CONCLUSION

The survey was aimed at collecting peoples' opinions regarding the factors that make them stick with social media applications even after knowing that their privacy is at risk. Results from the survey are conclusive enough to provide us relevant information about the factors which shape the users' decision making process.

Social media offers services of connection, communication, entertainment and information. Its messaging and multimedia sharing functionalities make it difficult for users to discontinue using them. Even if the users tried to use alternative apps, they weren't satisfied because the alternatives lacked major features. However, constant data collection and potential for misuse raise serious privacy concerns. The concern about privacy has spiked in the users as they have experienced targeted advertising based on their online activity. Some of them even got affected by privacy breaches or data leaks on social media platforms. Thus, a tradeoff between privacy and utility persists.

Considering the point of view of a user, the following improvements must be made: stricter regulations should be imposed on how social media platforms handle user data, companies should be more transparent about how they collect and use data, social media platforms must adequately inform users about their privacy policies. Conclusively, social media platforms should prioritize user privacy over business interest. The goal is to create a social media landscape that fosters connection while respecting individual privacy. By maintaining this balance, social media can be used for good causes without sacrificing the right to control one's information.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- Area of data collection: Our survey mostly involved campus students, possibly skewing our insights on social media and privacy. This focus might not capture the broader population's views, suggesting a need for more diverse future research to better understand these issues across different demographics and regions for a more comprehensive understanding.

- Practical Applications and Time-Sensitivity: The report may not provide practical recommendations for individuals, organizations, or policymakers to address the invasion of privacy on social media. It may not account for the rapidly changing nature of social media and the evolving concerns around privacy, which could render the findings outdated or incomplete.

APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE:

The following questionnaire was used to conduct the survey.

1. Despite concerns about privacy on social media, I still continue using these platforms because it connects me with friends and family
   a. Strongly disagree
   b. Disagree
   c. Neutral
   d. Agree
   e. Strongly Agree

2. Despite concerns about privacy on social media, I still continue using these platforms because I'm habitual to it
   a. Strongly disagree
   b. Disagree
   c. Neutral
   d. Agree
   e. Strongly Agree

3. Despite concerns about privacy on social media, I still continue using these platforms because it keeps me updated with information and news
   a. Strongly disagree
   b. Disagree
   c. Neutral
   d. Agree
   e. Strongly Agree

4. I use social media for Entertainment
   a. Strongly disagree
   b. Disagree
   c. Neutral
   d. Agree
   e. Strongly Agree

5. I use social media for Professional networking
   a. Strongly disagree
   b. Disagree
   c. Neutral

      d. Agree

      e. Strongly Agree

6. The Messaging and Multimedia sharing functionalities on social media platforms make it difficult for me to discontinue using them

      a. Strongly disagree

      b. Disagree

      c. Neutral

      d. Agree

      e. Strongly Agree

7. I have explored alternative social media platforms that prioritize privacy

      a. Strongly disagree

      b. Disagree

      c. Neutral

      d. Agree

      e. Strongly Agree

8. The factors that prevent me from making a switch to alternative social media platforms that prioritize privacy

      a. alternatives lack the features I need

      b. Unaware of privacy-focused alternatives

      c. Not many people I know use them

9. I frequently use social media platforms

      a. Strongly disagree

      b. Disagree

      c. Neutral

      d. Agree

      e. Strongly Agree

10. If yes, which social media apps do I use?

      a. Facebook

      b. Instagram

      c. Twitter

      d. Snapchat

      e. Reddit

      f. TikTok

      g. None

11. I read the privacy policies of social media apps before signing up for them?

      a. Strongly disagree

b. Disagree

c. Neutral

d. Agree

e. Strongly Agree

12. I am aware of the extent of my online privacy

a. 1

b. 2

c. 3

d. 4

e. 5

13. I have adjusted privacy settings on my social media accounts

a. Strongly disagree

b. Disagree

c. Neutral

d. Agree

e. Strongly Agree

14. I am concerned about my online privacy

a. 1

b. 2

c. 3

d. 4

e. 5

15. I am concerned about government surveillance affecting my online privacy

a. 1

b. 2

c. 3

d. 4

e. 5

16. I have experienced targeted advertising based on my online activity

a. Strongly disagree

b. Disagree

c. Neutral

d. Agree

e. Strongly Agree

17. I have adjusted the following privacy settings on social media platforms? (Select all that apply)

a. Profile visibility

b. Ad preferences

c. Data sharing settings

d. Location settings

e. Camera and microphone access

f. None of the above

18. I use tools or software for enhancing my online privacy

a. Strongly disagree

b. Disagree

c. Neutral

d. Agree

e. Strongly Agree

19. I have experienced a privacy breach or data leak on a social media platform

a. Strongly disagree

b. Disagree

c. Neutral

d. Agree

e. Strongly Agree

20. Social media platforms adequately inform users about their privacy policies

a. Strongly disagree

b. Disagree

c. Neutral

d. Agree

e. Strongly Agree

21. I have shared personal information on social media platforms

a. Strongly disagree

b. Disagree

c. Neutral

d. Agree

e. Strongly Agree

22. Social media platforms should be more transparent about how they collect and use data

a. Strongly disagree

b. Disagree

c. Neutral

d. Agree

e. Strongly Agree

23. I have deleted a social media account due to privacy concerns

    a. Strongly disagree

    b. Disagree

    c. Neutral

    d. Agree

    e. Strongly Agree

24. Stricter regulations should be imposed on how social media platforms handle user data

    a. Strongly disagree

    b. Disagree

    c. Neutral

    d. Agree

    e. Strongly Agree

25. Social media platforms prioritize user privacy over business interest

    a. Strongly disagree

    b. Disagree

    c. Neutral

    d. Agree

    e. Strongly Agree

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