Analysis of Services Provided by Myspace, Facebook, and Friendster

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Myspace, Facebook, and Friendster are three widely known and extensively used social networking services on the Internet. David M. Eberhardt summed up perfectly in his article, how these websites are becoming an intricate part of many people's lives. They can be used as an excellent way for friends and family to stay in touch, or be used as a way to meet new friends. However, some sites can be a better choice to use over others. In this project, the Accept or Deny team will be looking at different aspects of these three services to determine which is more suitable for use overall. The details we will be looking at include ease of use, speed, usability, and applications.

Myspace is a social-networking website used by over 100 million people worldwide (Spanbauer, 2008). A few eUniverse employees launched Myspace in August of 2003 after seeing the success of Friendster. It is free to utilize and is funded by advertisers, and other companies such as Google. Myspace's slogan is "a place for friends" and one of the initial appealing aspects of the website over Friendster is that emerging independent artists had an outlet to share their music. This allowed them to share it with friends, gain potential fans, and let these fans know about upcoming shows. In the five years since it's creation Myspace has grown to include a whole bevy of other utilities.

Initializing a Myspace account is rather simple – the only extraneous piece of information you need is a valid e-mail address. Once you enter in your name and birth date (they site offers different standard security percussions if you are under 16, and only lets you sign up if you are 14 and over), you are asked to upload some pictures of yourself which you don't have to right then or even at all if you choose (Miners, 2008). The next step is inviting your friends by entering in their e-mail addresses. This lets you have more "friends" on the webpage but at the same time is really just giving Myspace more business. From there customization is all up to the user.

Initially one was allowed to upload 9 photos. Now, photo uploading is unlimited with the added capabilities of being able to make photo albums and "tag" your other Myspace friends in photos that you have uploaded. Other features include: Blogs with the ability to screen who views them and who can comment on them, ability to add events with links to other Myspace pages (for example music shows), add videos and music, create events, post bulletins, comment on other's blogs, pages, and pictures, one can track changes their friends made to their pages, have "top friends", see if them and another user have mutual friends, and the list of features that Myspace provides to their users could continue on for another page (Miners, 2008). On top of those, though, Myspace offers the ability to customize and add a lot to your page through the use of a user's knowledge of HTML. Thus opening up a platform for someone to have a somewhat complex personal page for free! With so many features Myspace tends to have lots of down time.

Some of the site's features are often down due to constant re-working of applications. Also, the site often runs at a very slow pace no matter what computer or Internet one is using. This is probably due to the mass amount of users overloading the server at once. If one is having a problem with Myspace and would like to delete theirs it is a little harder then just pressing a delete button. One must go threw numerous steps to do so, but it is possible. If during this process though a person has a question that needs to be answered the Myspace webpage's help section offers very little assistance. There is also no help phone line offered. For complete social-networking website novice's this is not a good area for a site to be lacking in. One are they have buffed up a little over the years is their privacy settings. Myspace is well known for the amount of spam and virus it has inflicted (accidentally) on its users. It is apparent that the site is aware of this and is taking active steps to reduce it. One such example is a new feature where if you click on a link to a non-Myspace page the site asks you first if

you wish to go to this site and leave Myspace and that you enter the site at your own risk.

Facebook is another online directory that connects people through social networks. It was created by Mark Zuckerbeg initially to connect college and university students who ordinarily would not interact around campus. Today, there are four different networks one can join: college/university, high school, workplace, and region (Krivak).

There are many how-to websites, which offer step-by-step guides to setting up a Facebook account. Steps are laid out in simple terms and are easy to navigate. Individual web pages are initialized simply by clicking on the "register" link, providing some basic information, and agreeing to the "Terms of use" and "Privacy Policy". Next, an email confirmation is requested. One then fills out their profile by clicking the "edit" link and including any information, which they would want others to view about themselves. Based on the information provided, others may locate and view the web pages, and establish new relationships and networks.

Several features of Facebook include the Wall, which is space dedicated for messaging, and status, which updates others on an individual's feelings and whereabouts. Members can add photos, join interest groups, view local and campus-wide events, buy and sell items, and share music and itunes.

Facebook, though typically used by college students, has expanded to include anyone over the age of 13; the free-access website now has more than 64 million active users worldwide (Krivak). Originally Facebook was much less popular within the adolescent community due to its lack of creative concepts and appeal. Today, there are actually websites, which have been created, such as Facebook Blast, to enhance individual profiles through additional applications and graphics, making its popularity increasingly widespread.

Facebook has grown to be one of the largest national social networking sites. Its notoriety is likely due to the abundance of amenities it offers. Not just a place for casual chat, Facebook provides a means for communicating virtually, quickly, and efficiently. Students are informed of the many campus-wide events, which take place daily, as well as future events. Facebook's website is easy to navigate; completing a few simple steps is all that it takes to set up an individual account. One can personalize their web page and express their creativity through the many features available, such as graphics, pictures, etc. Facebook also offers users the option to report what may be considered inappropriate behavior, messaging, and/or language; this further secures the safety and security of its members.

As earlier mentioned, Facebook can be an essential tool for communicating within a given group, be it a college, workplace, or region. But one might infer that lowering the minimum age allowed for setting up an account might attract people who aren't using the site for the right reasons. As with anything else, problems may arise, creating a somewhat hostile environment. For the most part, Facebook looks most appealing to those individuals who use it for positive reasons, be it education, networking, or simply connecting with old friends.

Facebook is very user friendly and highly values confidentiality and safety. It is solely the user's discretion whom to allow view of their personal profile, which often times may include sensitive information, though including such information is highly advised against.

Although not as popular, Friendster is another social networking service available to the public. Jonathan Abrams created friendster in 2002 here in the United States. It was an extremely popular site until in 2004 when Myspace began increasing in popularity. Today, Friendster still has over fifty million users with a large population of clients in Asia.

The initial creation of a Friendster page is simple enough. Good directions are given in areas some non-computer savvy people may find difficult, such as the uploading of a picture. However, after the initial page is created it becomes somewhat overwhelming. The amount of information they want and questions they ask is almost ridiculous. Questions include specific details, which no outside person should know or be asking. If you choose not to answer these questions, your updated profile cannot be saved. After first creating a page and seeing what other options are available, it becomes quite confusing where to start. Drop down menus open tabs which open to new tabs and more options. Like the other sites already discussed, websites are available to Friendster users providing more customization for their page. Another annoying aspect of Friendster was pointed out by the creator, Jonathan Abrams himself in a column he wrote. Users of Friendster could fall subject to "Friend Spam." Friend requests from other users go to you email; hence if you are a popular person you will have a lot of unread mail.

One quality some users of Friendster may find appealing is the vast amount of applications on this site. All in all there are two hundred and forty-eight pages of nothing but different types of applications, some of which are useable on your own Friendster page. However, while attempting to use some of the applications, the loading times can be a bit too long for some people's level of patience. Also, some of the applications have some features that, for one reason or another, do not work correctly. There are no error messages or downloads available in these instances, they just simply do not perform the function they are suppose to.

The help function on Friendster takes you to a frequently asked questions page. This page also includes an option to send a question to Friendster if your question is not on the FAQ's list. A feature, which stands out, is when a new question is added to the frequently asked questions list, the word "New" is placed just before the question. This is appealing because if someone had an unusual problem which just started

occurring and wanted to look at the page to see if it was an issue already being addressed, they could quickly glance at the questions beginning with the word "New" without having to go through the entire list of questions.

Myspace, Facebook, and Friendster are all used for social networking, but vary in many ways. Virtually anyone who has access to the Internet can set up a Myspace page, and restrictions are not as prominent as with Facebook. Entire page layouts can be applied to Myspace web pages. Probably the best attribute about Myspace is its allowance for users to express themselves in completely unique and versatile ways; no two web pages are the same. Facebook is much more contemporary than both Myspace and Friendster, and offers users campus-wide and regional connections that may other wise seem unobtainable. Friendster is sufficient in its ability to connect users through a single online source, however requests an abundant amount of personal information to setup an account, and is much less known than the other two.

All of the three are beneficial in their own unique ways. They are all of decent overall quality, however some more than others. Each one seems to appeal to a different social group, be it adolescents, students, or colleagues. Regardless of which one is preferred over the other, they are all great means of staying in contact with others, getting informed of valuable information, and social and business networking, all of which are valuable tools to becoming successful.

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