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**TECHNOLOGY**

**IN**

**SOCIAL MEDIA**

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Social media has made its way to the forefront of everyone’s world for many, many years now. From Myspace to Facebook to Instagram to TikTok, social media has absolutely taken over the world. There are no limits and the services provided by social media are ones that we use on a daily and with the advancement of technology—it seems like social media will be in our faces forever.

The evolution of technology is social media has opened doors to new ways of interacting with one another from wherever you are in the world. Social media apps are used to be interactive and engaging with people from all over the world, allowing communication to always be in the palm of your hand. There lots of things to do on social media like posting pictures and videos from your camera roll, uploading an in-the-moment story, liking, commenting, and sharing your friends’ content, and being able to share ideas with one click.

In Maryville University’s article, “The Evolution of Social Media…” it talks about the evolution of social media dating back to 1844. It also talks about the rapid growth of social media, “the United States showed that 72% of American adults use some form of social media. In 2005, the year after Facebook went live, that number was at 5%.” Social media has slowly climbed to the top since its debut, but in the year of 2024, it is certainly at its peak. In the 1980s, communication services like CompuServe and Prodigy were introduced, offering real-time online chatting. This set up the foundation for future social media apps to come.

In the early 2000s, Myspace launched. “By 2006, it was the most visited website on the planet,” says the article. People were able to share their favorite music onto their profiles. A couple years later, Mark Zuckerberg launched Facebook, which is now used by more than 50% of adults in America. Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat all launched throughout the early 2010s introducing three different types of social media styles which would impact the world nationwide. Instagram with the ability to create your own feed and upload your favorite photos and videos for your followers; Snapchat and their filters which carried many childhoods (including my own); and Twitter which serves like a digital diary—being able to tweet your every and any thought for users to like and retweet. As iconic as these apps are and will forever be known as the OG social media apps, in 2018, Musical.ly, became TikTok; which is an app that allows for 15 second videos to be recorded and uploaded. “As of early 2020, it had more than 800 million users worldwide.” TikTok has absolutely taken over and is arguably the most popular social media platform now. It’s kind of a little bit of every other social media app mixed uniquely together.

The advancement of smartphones and tablets and technology have really given social media the space to evolve. There are many aspects of this that can benefit from all this new tech. Companies and businesses have found new ways to expand their own message through these social media platforms. The ads we see on YouTube and Instagram are all businesses trying to gain more traction. According to the same Maryville University site, “Companies discovered the potential utility of cultivating an active, engaged social media presence. The act of creating or posting entertaining content on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and other platforms is an attempt by brands to grow an audience organically,” through these ads, us as consumers are exposed to new trends and new items we may want to have in our possession. Having the opportunity to watch other real people test these products out really does benefit consumers and business.

Another group of people who benefit off social media, are the already and rising influencers. Over time it has gotten easier to blow up on any social media platform. Now, TikTok has become a real source of gaining popularity that many people have taken advantage from. Who knew you could be set for life by just posting a 15 second video clip? Even then, influencers take their platform and take the time to build a community of viewers. This is important for everyone involved; viewers feel a sense of safety and community, influencers get noticed by brands which helps their platform expand and the business they’re partnering with. It also helps people to stay connected and informed due to the easy access of the internet to stay up to date on news and trends.

A technological change that has influenced social media is the quality and camera quality of phones as time goes. Helping visualize the experience, with new advancements like Augmented Reality. Augmented reality is a kind of software that can recognize an object through a screen. According to the Harvard Business Review, “AR can provide a view of the real-time data flowing from products and allow users to control them by touchscreen, voice, or gesture,” for example, on Snapchat, there is an embedded platform called “Bitmoji,” which allows users to create an avatar that looks just like them. Over time, Bitmoji has changed and updated and now Snapchat has little games you can play with them, and filters users can use to move their bitmoji around a room and interact with them. Another example of AR that I have seen in real life, is when it comes to online shopping. Apps like Ikea and Sephora have this augmented reality which allows buyers to “try-on” makeup by showing their face on the screen; and the product they are testing out will appear on their face as if it they had the actual thing in person. With Ikea, people can digitally imagine the furniture in their homes with this feature. Augmented reality has impacted the way consumers shop, “as the user moves, the size and orientation of the AR display automatically adjust to the shifting context,” a new and innovative way to engage with different concepts.

Another advancement that is influencing social media is Artificial Intelligence. According to Forbes, “the number of active social media users worldwide was 4.26 billion as of 2021. Along with such growth in social media users, the need for AI solutions to understand customer preferences is also rising.” AI is “technology in which enables computers and machines to simulate human intelligence and problem-solving capabilities,” says IBM.com, which majorly contributes to social media platforms who need the help managing all this information. AI can help business grow by including text and visualities which can help businesses and content creators trying to spread their platform.

A way AI is used in our daily lives that people may not realize—are the algorithms curated uniquely for each individual user. The posts you see on your explore page, timeline, and for you page is all AI tools learning more about you to smartly put together streams of content that will keep users engaging and active on social media. Other ways artificial intelligence has benefited social media is through influencer marketing, ad management, monitoring logo detection which can help a company learn how often their logo is popping up on viewers timelines; and how many clicks they’re receiving, and so much more.

While AI may sound super cool and innovative, there are flaws and challenges that come with. Yes, AI does help with algorithms, it may not be in the best interest of the consumer. Algorithms are intellectually designed to keep users engaged, but as to what is used can range from feeding into insecurities a person may have to a cute animal someone would like to see. “Additionally, the rapid technological advancement means that regulatory frameworks and ethical guidelines still have to catch up, leaving AI developers and social media companies to confront complex ethical and legal issues alone” states Forbes, drawing a worry on people in the business industry trying to make it. AI can mostly be helpful, but because of the constant information it is always receiving, it too can get out of whack. It is best not to always rely on the robot.

There are several other issues in AI, but the last one that will be mentioned is the future of careers. A lot of jobs and businesses are heavily online now and there are many companies needing less people because of how useful AI is to them. According to SEO.ai, “In May 2023, 3,900 US job losses were directly linked to AI,” which can be unsettling to think of how a human can be replaced for a machine. It is important to make sure viewers are educated on the benefits but also the dangers of social media and technology.

To prevent the information of consumers getting leaked; there are security processes offered by most of social media platforms. Two-factor authentication (2FA) is a security process that users can enable that will force them to show two different forms of identification in order to verify themselves. Having to go through this process may occur when an app may suspect weird activity happening on your account, if you’re trying to log in to a social media account on a different device, etc. This provides a higher level of security to make sure that everyone’s personal information is kept safe and personal.

This is the two-factor authentication process according to Tech Target Security:

1. “The user is prompted to log in by the application or the website.
2. The user enters what they know -- usually, username and password. Then, the site's server finds a match and recognizes the user.
3. For processes that don't require passwords, the website generates a unique security key for the user. The authentication tool processes the key, and the site's server validates it.
4. The site then prompts the user to initiate the second login step. Although this step can take a number of forms, the user has to prove that they have something only they would have, such as biometrics, a security token, an ID card, a smartphone or other mobile device. This is the inherence or possession factor.
5. Then, the user may have to enter a one-time code that was generated during step four.
6. After providing both factors, the user is authenticated and granted access to the application or website.”

The benefits of that extra step really do pay off when it comes to scammers and hackers. It is important to stay insightful on how to keep safe on social media and ways to prevent falling into the trap of someone dangerous.

The Federal Trade Commission for Consumer Advice website discusses the importance of looking out for scammers by mentioning their go-to tactics and how to avoid falling for one. This mentions online ads, and since a good portion of people are on social media, we are more prone to seeing these scammer ads all the time. They make themselves very believable and falling for a scam online can lead a scammer to do much worse. Phone calls and pop-up warnings are common ways people can fall into a trap and this site goes into depth as to how to get yourself out of a scamming situation and how to prevent it from happening again.

Scammers are dangerous people that meticulously try to get people to either click links, or much worse for their own personal gain whether it be for money or entertainment. Hackers as well—kind of go hand in hand with scammers—are people out there trying to get information out of innocent users. They are everywhere and it is important to make sure that any phone calls, messages, emails, and notifications recieved on/from social media must be double checked before agreeing to giving your information.

Overall, the technology of social media has clearly shown its growth and development. We have fully stepped into the digital era and there are pros and cons to this. The evolution of social media and the way it has embedded itself so deeply in every person nationwide is crazy to think about. Even with naming the different apps over the years, the evolution is evident. But as always, it is important to never get too comfortable online because of digital footprints and just for the prevention of someone dangerous gaining access to your information. No matter what side of social media a person may be on, whether it be as a viewer, influencer, or manager of a business, having the knowledge of social media and understanding the ins and outs to its full is key.

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