

General Concept of Social Networking

Social Networking has become very popular in recent years, but it can still be quite difficult to understand this concept, particularly if he/she is new to this phenomenon. Once signed onto a social network, having answered a few basic profile questions, you would sit back and wonder what you are supposed to do next!!

The websites that offer social networking tools are known as known as social networking sites. These websites function as an online community of internet users. Depending on the website in question, many of these online community members share common interests in hobbies, religion, politics and alternative lifestyles. Once you are granted access to a social networking website you can begin to socialise. This socialisation may include reading the profile pages of other members and possibly even contacting them.

This is because unlike most high schools, colleges or workplaces, the internet is filled with millions of individuals who are looking to meet other people, to gather and share first-hand information and experiences about cooking, golfing, gardening, developing friendships professional alliances, finding employment, business-to-business marketing and even groups sharing information. The topics and interests are as varied and rich as the story of our universe.

The easiest way to understand social networking is to think of it like high school. You had friends in school, and you knew quite a few people even if you weren't friends with all of them, but it's likely that you didn't know everyone. If you ever moved to a new school or if you can imagine moving to a new school, you start

out with no friends. After attending classes, you start meeting people and as you meet them, you begin associating with those that have similar interests.

Getting started with social networking is much the same as starting at a new school. At first, you don't have any friends. But as you join groups, you begin to meet people, and you build a friends list of those with similar interests.

Social networking is based on a certain structure that allows people to both express their individuality and meet people with similar interests. This structure includes having profiles, friends, blog posts, widgets and usually something unique to that particular social networking website -- such as the ability to 'poke' people using those websites (Facebook, Hi5). The terms widely used in Social Networking are Post, Friends, Profile, Groups, Discussions, Blogs, Requests, Forums, Widgets etc.

Friends:

Friends are trusted members of the site that are allowed to post comments on your profile or send you private messages. You can also keep tabs on how your friends are using social networking, such as when they post a new picture or update their profile. Friends are the heart and soul of social networking. It should be noted that not all social networks refer to them as 'friends' - LinkedIn refers to them as 'connections' - but all social networks have a way to designate members as trusted.

Profile:

This is where you tell the world about yourself. Profiles contain basic information, like where you live and how old you are and personality questions, like who's your

favorite actor and what's your favorite book. Social networks dedicated to a special theme like music or movies might ask questions related to that theme.

Groups:

Most social networks use groups to help you find people with similar interests or engage in discussions on certain topics. A group can be anything from People who like "Games", "Movies" to "Jobs" etc.; they are both a way to connect with like-minded people and a way to identify your interests.

Discussions:

A primary focus of groups is to create interaction between users in the form of discussions. Most social networking websites support discussion boards for the groups, and many also allow members of the group to post videos, pictures, music, and other material related to the group.

Blogs:

Another feature of some social networks is the ability to create your own blog entries. Blog can be defined as virtual diary of someone who updates regularly. Blogging through a social network is perfect for keeping people informed on what you are up to.

Providers of Blogs: Blogger, LiveJournal, wordpress, Bravenet, Typepad etc.

Widgets:

A web widget is a small helpful software program embedded directly into a web page. It's a popular way of letting your personality shine through is by gracing

your social networking profile with web widgets. Many social networks allow a variety of widgets and you can usually find interesting widgets located on widget galleries.

Examples of Widgets: Daily weather reports, Clocks and countdown timers, Blog Feeds, Joke of the days etc.

Why Start Social Networking is so popular:

Social Networking is a nice form of entertainment, great for meeting people with similar interests and can be a very effective business technique for entrepreneurs, writers, actors, musicians or artists. Most of us have hobbies or things that we are keenly interested in such as books, television, video games or movies. Social networks allow us to reach out to others that have the same interests.

For example, if you like movies, **Flixster** can help you decide if you might like a new movie just out at the theaters. If you like music, **Last.FM** can help you find new artists that are similar to your favorite bands.

Social impact of social networking websites:

Web-based social networking services make it possible to connect people who share interests and activities across political, economic and geographic borders through e-mail and instant messaging, online communities. Information is particularly suited to gift economy, as information is a non rival good and can be gifted at practically no cost.

Facebook and other social networking tools are increasingly the object of scholarly research. Scholars in many fields have begun to investigate the impact

of social-networking sites, investigating how such sites may play into issues of identity, privacy, social capital, youth culture and education.

A 2011 survey found that 47% of American adults use a social networking service.

Top 15 most Interesting Social Networks and their functionalities in brief:

Human beings are social creatures, and therefore, are dedicated to creating and participating in “social networks” in order to express and share their ideas. With the rise of the internet, people began satisfying this natural necessity in online communities such as internet forums. The evolution of these social forums resulted in today’s global social networking.

Today, everyone has heard of the most popular social network— Facebook – but there are many more social networks than solely Mark Zuckerberg’s popular website. Some of these are designed for sharing information, some can help you find a new job, some are used for sharing videos, music or pictures and some are uniting members of a particular interest. Here is a list of the most interesting social networks there are and what makes them so remarkable.

1. Facebook:

Facebook is a global social network, which hundreds of millions of users use to connect and share content. Currently, Facebook has more than 900 million users. After registering on Facebook, you may create your own personal profile and add friends that you want to share status updates, photos, videos or chat with.



Furthermore, there are Facebook Pages, which you can ‘like’ to become part of a

community that has a common interest – favorite actor, popular brand, favorite company etc. You must be at least 13 years of age in order to create a Facebook account.

2. Twitter:



Twitter is a social network, but is drastically different than Facebook. It is a micro-publishing system, which allows you to compose short messages of 140 characters that are known as "**Tweets**". To create your own Twitter community – you can '**follow**' someone in order to receive their Tweets in your news feed or you can be '**followed**' by others and they will receive your Tweets. Another special characteristic of Twitter is the use of **hash tags** in order to reach a larger audience. By using a *hash tag* symbol (e.g. #Twitter) other Twitter users that are following that particular **hash tag** are more likely to see your Tweets.

3. YouTube:

Of course, YouTube is not considered as a social media platform; it has social media characteristics and is very popular, thus making it worth mentioning.

YouTube is a video-sharing website where you can view, share, upload, comment on, like or dislike videos. The majority of the content that is uploaded

to YouTube originates from individual persons. However, there are many official YouTube "**Channels**" for companies, bands, singers etc. In order to upload, comment or **like/dislike** videos you have to create a YouTube account. However,



unregistered users are still allowed to watch videos. YouTube is included in this list, because it has its own community and similar to other social networks, you can “like” content, interact with other users, and follow the Channels that you find interesting.

4. LinkedIn:



It is a social network designated for “professionals”. This means that part of your LinkedIn profile that is most important is your career, jobs, education and other skills. Many users are no longer sending the traditional Curriculum Vitae to their potential employers; instead they are sending them a link to their LinkedIn profile. Surprisingly, many employers are even requiring job candidates to provide their LinkedIn profile with their cover letter. Besides allowing you to publish your CV, LinkedIn allows users to join groups, use applications, post your business references, and search for any type of business contact. Additionally, this business social network is an invaluable tool for managers and human resource directors. This social network helps many HR officers and headhunters search a large pool of potential employees. However, the basic LinkedIn profile is limited in function. If you want more advanced options then there is a monthly user fee.

5. Google+:

Google+ is one of the newest social networks, launched by Google in June 28, 2011. The server presents itself as a service that can help you stay in touch with your friends and acquaintances, and discover new interesting



people. Once you will register to Google+, you can fill in your personal information, upload your profile picture, add photo albums from Google Picasa Web Albums, and connect your Google+ profile with your Twitter profile and much more. Moreover, you can communicate either just with one of your friends, groups of people or you can speak to the “whole world.” Depending on your privacy settings you can allow anyone to see your status updates or comments. You also have the option of reading status updates of others even if they are not one of your friends.

6. Instagram:

Instagram is also a relatively new social networks launched in October 2010. It is a smartphone application that allows you to take photos, apply various digital filters



to a photo, and you can share them with other users on Instagram or other social networks.

What differentiates Instagram from other services is the square shape of all the photos, in comparison with the usual 4:3 ratio from regular cameras. In April 2012, Facebook acquired Instagram for a billion dollars.

7. Pinterest:

Pinterest is a very unique social network. On Pinterest, you have a virtual **pinboard**, where you can create, manage and share image collections that are related to a particular topic – hobbies, interests, household etc. Once you are registered, you can browse other user's **pin boards**, “like” their photos and “re-pin” their images to your own pin board. Founders of Pinterest



believe it should “connect everyone in the world through the ‘things’ they find interesting.” You can use Pinterest to decorate your home, organize your wedding or search through food recipes. Pinterest has been particularly successful amongst the female demographic.

8. Yelp:

Yelp is another unique social network, which was founded in 2004. It helps you to find great local businesses like restaurants, hair saloons or shops. As a Yelp user,



you can search reviews of local businesses as well as write your own review based on a past experience. Moreover, you can use Yelp to look for various events, lists or just chat with other users. Every business can

establish their own account to share photos and messages with other users. Similar to other social networks, the majority of Yelp reviews come from advertising that businesses are purchasing. This has resulted in Yelp receiving criticism that advertisers are affecting the reliability of Yelp’s ratings and reviews. However, Yelp has clearly stated that no one, including paying advertisers, can change or tamper with existing user reviews.

9. SoundCloud:

SoundCloud is an online sound-sharing service that allows you to record, upload and share music or other audio recordings. Recording and uploading songs to SoundCloud can be done either privately, with specific individuals, or you share them publicly on websites or social networks. The reason



SoundCloud was included in this list is that any user can find, create or share music or audio recordings amongst a large number of groups that cover every genre or style. Thus, you can stay in touch with people that are interested in the same music genre, listen to people that are contributing in this genre and comment on the songs or recordings of others.

10. Flickr:

Flickr is an online photo-sharing and image/video hosting service that allows you to share photos and videos with your friends or others and you can organise the

flickr photos in an original way. You may also grant permission to others to organise photos, add notes below a photo or tag photos. You can use Flickr to discover photos from other people, organisations and companies such as NASA. You may also comment on other photos and create a specific community with the people that are sharing your photos.

11. Badoo:

Badoo was launched in 2006, and today is one of the largest social networks for meeting new people. Badoo's founders state their mission is "to provide the world's easiest, fastest and most fun way for people to meet each other." Thus, Badoo is mainly a dating-focused online service – users of Badoo can chat with each other, set up dates and rate others pictures. Badoo has some 160 million users making it the largest dating-focused social network.



Even though, it is open to people that are 18 and higher, there has been criticism that there are a lot of younger users.

12. Flixster:

Flixster is an online service that combines social networking and movie reviewing.



As a Flixster user you can share movie reviews, discover new movies, learn about movies you don't know about and get in touch with people that are interested in the same movies and movie genres as you. In addition, you can integrate Flixster to your Facebook profile so you can share movies with your Facebook friends, discover movies that your friends are watching and add movie reviews to your Timeline. Furthermore, in 2008 Flixster introduced a new iPhone application, which allows you to access movie reviews, trailers and show-times.

13. Classmates:

Classmates.com is one of the oldest social networks – it was launched in 1995. This social networking service allows its users to reconnect with their friends, acquaintances and, as the name suggest, classmates from kindergarten through University. At first, the service was

designated for American users from



American schools and businesses. However,

soon the service spread worldwide and now is helping people find their “lost” friends and former classmates not only in United States but also in Canada,

Austria, Sweden, Switzerland, Germany, France and American/Canadian Schools overseas.

14. Myspace:

Myspace is a social network launched in August, 2003. At one point, Myspace was the most visited social networking site, surpassing Google as the most visited

myspace website in the US in 2006. Shortly after Myspace was surpassed by Facebook in terms of unique visitors and since then, its user rate has constantly declined. In spite of this failure, Myspace set the foundations of today's mass media social networking services, including its gaming platform that started the success of the present social networking games giant – Zynga. Moreover, Myspace has its own Instant Messenger – MyspaceIM, which is an independent program for Windows as well as a web-based client. You have to be older than 14 years to be able to register to Myspace.

15. hi5:

Hi5 is a social networking site which was launched in 2003. It has many similar features to other social networks, like the ability to create a profile to show off

your personal information, share interests, join friend networks, share photos, create user groups, post status updates, listen to music and post comments. In 2009,



hi5 has added several new features aimed for the gaming and entertainment community. Despite the fact that hi5 was launched in United States, it became

more popular in other countries, predominantly in Latin America and Mongolia and in 2008, hi5 was believed to be the third most visited social network.

Note: There are so many Social networking sites like orkut, Zorpia.com, stylefm.com. whatsup, Bebo, ibibo etc. which are familiar to some group of people.

Model Questions

1. _____ concept has become very popular during the past few Years.
(Social Networking)
2. Social Networking is also use as a nice form of _____. **(Entertainment)**
3. Facebook is a _____ social network. **(Global)**
4. Twitter is a social network, but it is different than _____. **(Facebook)**
5. Linkedin is a social network designated for _____. **(Professionals)**
6. Instagram is also a social networks, it is a Smartphone application that allows you to take _____. **(Photos)**
7. Pinterest is a very unique social network to create, manage and share _____.
(Image collections)
8. SoundCloud is a social network which uses online _____ service. **(Sound-sharing)**
10. Flickr is a social network that functions based on online photo-sharing and Image/video _____. **(Hosting service)**
11. Flixster is an online service that combines social networking and _____ reviewing. **(Movie)**

SK. Faiz Ahmed, M.Tech, PhD, Nellore.