



JNANADEEPA: Pune Journal of Religious Studies

PJRS ISSN P-0972-3331

ISSN P-0972-3331

20/1-2 Jan-Dec 2016: 231-254

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.4271993

Stable URL: <http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4271993>

Befriending The Other: Use and Abuse of Social Media

P. T. Joseph, SJ

Director, Marian International Institute of Management, Kuttikanam

Abstract: The proliferation of smart phones and expansion in wireless connectivity form part of the pattern of our increasingly persistent virtual presence on social media services that has all but collapsed the boundary between being online and offline. Befriending the other used to happen off-line. Now with the proliferation of mobile devices and internet connectivity, befriending the other can happen online. There are more than two billion active social media users worldwide, representing a global penetration rate of 28 percent. This ability to engage so readily with digital media and online networks is empowering but our actions can also make us vulnerable. As the social networking is being increasingly used as an education and information resource, we have to decide how to make it a non-abuse place for our society. Pornography, violence, obscenity and hatred lurk in unexpected places, and innocent children stumble upon them all too frequently.

Keywords: Social connectivity, Cyberbullying, Online communities, Social media addiction, Surveillance society, Commodification of identity, Global village, Abuse of Social media

0. Introduction: Proliferation of Social Media

The proliferation of smart phones and expansion in wireless connectivity form part of the pattern of our increasingly

persistent virtual presence on social media services that has all but collapsed the boundary between being online and offline. Befriending the other used to happen off-line. Now with the explosion of mobile devices, befriending the other can happen online. The virtual and the real form a seamless space in which many of us live out our daily' lives. We fashion the self through social interaction, community, and network affiliations, and in these ways we construct our identities as well as interpret the identity of the others we interact with. The age of social media and networks and the ease with which individuals can now produce, reproduce, and distribute digital content has powerfully shifted the ways in which we think about personal and global connectedness, distribution of artefacts and access to media, social action, and the production of knowledge.

There are more than two billion active social media users worldwide, representing a global penetration rate of about 28 percent. This ability to engage so readily with digital media and online networks is empowering our ability to befriend the other, but our actions can also make us vulnerable. Social media make us suffer the pressures of information overload and time management. The Internet has shifted from a set of static objects to a dynamic network of connected, interacting subjects. The term digital identity is broad. It stretches from the 'certification of an individual to partake in authentication based transactions such as managing an online bank account' to 'online personas that are made visible through selective acts of self-disclosure, such as writing a blog or sharing our Facebook profile'.

There are millions of people on the internet who are looking to meet other people and to gather and share information and experiences on a variety of topics. Because of this, hundreds of social networking sites have been created, and they have attracted millions of users in the few short years that social networking has become a phenomenon. Whatsapp is one

application which is expanding exponentially . As of October 1st 2015, there are 700 million daily users of Whatsapp. The estimate is that every day 1 million users are added to Whatsapp. Today there are more than 1 billion users of Whatsapp. There are many such applications in use these days. Most of the key features of these sites are very similar, yet the cultures that form around the social networking sites vary in many different ways. Some of the sites target diverse audiences, while others attract people based on common language, race, sexual preferences, religion, or nationality. The sites also vary the ways in which they show and incorporate new information and communication tools, like mobile access, blogging, and photo and video sharing.

In recent years, digital media and networks have become embedded in our everyday lives, and are part of broad-based changes to how we engage in knowledge production, communication, and creative expression.

1. Need for Social Connectivity and Community

Social connectivity is part of being human and there has never been a time in human history when people have been able to connect to one another with such ease. Social connections are no longer restricted to the people in our immediate surroundings, instead electronic media , such as smart phones, emails, and online social networks, have enabled us to connect with those both near and far. Specifically, the use of online networks have come to be an integrated part of people's daily routines¹. While feeling socially connected is important for our health there are still uncertainties about the implications of online connectedness.

Indeed, people are wired to socially connect. They are social beings who strive to connect and form bonds with each other, which is termed social connectedness². The broad concept of social connectedness refers to the desire people have to create

and maintain relationships, the social bonds they have with others, and the feeling of belongingness that results from these bonds. Social connectedness can be expressed through various needs fulfillments and social behaviors, such as seeking out other individuals to avoid feeling lonely, to ask for advice, or simply to socialize. Furthermore, people do not simply strive to create bonds they also resist dissolving relationships.

It is not until fairly recently the internet has exploded as a venue for social connectedness. Specifically, online social networks have emerged as a new way to socially connect, and in a short period of time connecting through these sites has become as common as other social phenomenon such as grabbing a tea/coffee with a friend. The media format allows for easy and convenient interaction among individuals, independent of their physical location. Thus, these online social networks have become a common way for people to share, communicate, and gather information. Indeed, several studies indicate that online social networks are now a common part of daily life, particularly among young adults all over the world³.

Social psychology recognizes the need for connectedness of human beings where the pursuit of connectedness represents one of the basic motivational principles that underlie social behavior. Connectedness can be described as the feeling of belonging to a social group and implies the creation of bonding relationships. The concept of “connectedness” can be defined as “a positive emotional appraisal which is characterized by a feeling of staying in touch within ongoing social relationships⁴”.

According to self-psychology theory⁵, a sense of social connectedness develops early in life and extends throughout the life span. In childhood, for example, parent-child attachments provide an initial sense of security and likeness with others. In adolescence, peer affiliations and group memberships allow

individuals to identify with others who share similarities in appearance, interests, and talents. By adulthood, the aggregate of these past and present relationship experiences are gradually incorporated into one's overall sense of self, providing a relatively stable psychological sense of connectedness that is not susceptible to vacillations in relationships, such as the loss of a friend or social exclusion from a group. People with high connectedness tend to feel very close with other people, easily identify with others, perceive others as friendly and approachable, and participate in social groups and activities.

The notion of community is at the heart of the World Wide Web. The psychological need for connectedness could therefore explain the popularity of social networks such as Facebook.

Social media and online communities offer increased possibilities for connection, interaction and participation but also new media with tools for self-presentation and identity management.

Social media such as Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, Flickr, and others have been growing at a tremendous rate and the adoption rate of such media has been skyrocketing which, in turn, has delivered astronomical numbers of users in less than 15 years. As a consequence of this astounding phenomenon involving both the rapid emergence of this cutting-edge technology and its adoption, social media have become an integral part of the contemporary classroom, of advertising and public relations industries, of political campaigning, and of numerous other aspects of our daily existence.

Originating from the Internet, different online communities pervade the public and private life.

Being part of a community or group fulfils one of the basic human needs, that of *belonging*. Nowadays the use of the Internet to build different interest-based and self-identified

communities evidently stresses that communities do not necessarily need to interact face-to-face. The development of the Internet resulted in the increase of different online communities since information and communication technologies enabled geographically disperse groups and individuals to connect.

Online communities cannot just be built. It can only be facilitated in order to provide people with inter-action platforms where people could come and participate in or form a community of their choice. This alone emphasises the human factor within the design of cyberspaces. Online communities do not have physical borders but social life within these communities does have expression boundaries as well as norms and rules for behaviour on-line and sometimes also off-line. These boundaries for social actions and behaviour are either inherited by the structure of a certain e-space or different social media, i.e., discussion forums and social networking websites, or imposed by the designers and users of e-spaces. In order to be successful, online communities, e-spaces and other electronic congregations need regular users. Cyberspace does not exist without electronic inhabitants; otherwise it is a deserted cyber place. The sense of community is one of the important social features that shape both the social qualities of an online community as well as activities and behaviour of the community members. Sense of community is often described as a set of subjective experiences of belonging, mutual respect, and commitment that can be gained only through interaction and participation.

The degree of success and functionality of virtual communities is incorporated and built through trustworthy group interaction. The rise of social software and online social networks impose new challenges for law, security and trust, identity and interaction. The challenges go sometimes as far as

to raise questions related to democracy and citizens' degree of participation in private or public online communities.

Entering cyberspace concerns issues of both *identity* and *identification*. The possibility to anonymously participate in online communities may ease the entrance to online communities. Some participants, though, may dislike anonymous people. They may however, gravitate towards digitally eponymous people welcoming them in an electronically-mediated social environment.

There is a multiplicity of people in online communities: e-learners, visitors of different chat rooms, participants of interest groups, and members of support groups and e-communities, as well as users of social media. All share different needs and have different aims. In cyberspace, group and community formation as well as identity building, testing and maintenance comprise the social, cultural and psychological aspects of behaviour with communication technologies.

The phenomenon of the digital identity has been referred to by many different terms including: online identity, online personality, digiSelf, virtual identity, avatar and online persona.

Marshall McLuhan, a communications theorist, philosopher and media guru, prophesied his visions of the future long before the world wide web existed. In McLuhan's iconic 1962 media analysis, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man*, he introduced the idea of the 'global village'.⁶ The term global village described a phenomena in which the world would become more closely interconnected like a village, and where the movement of information would instantaneously transmit from one point of the earth to another. McLuhan predicted the global village would happen with the rise of electronic technology and mass-media. The global village is

now used as a metaphor for the Internet, as the movement of information has become instantaneous, connecting the world and people to an intense degree that was not possible before.

As McLuhan prophesised the current reality of the ‘global village’, an online identity can be likened to be the global village’s citizen or ‘netizen’. The birth of a digital identity can start as easily and simply as creating a name, account or handle to register on an Internet website, and can be as elaborate as an online existence that spans over many different websites, including a multi-media trail that can include anything from photographs, text, videos, music and even live webcams.

2. Social Media Driving Changes in the Society

Social media’s quick development into an important way to influence society is part of the advancement of information and communication technologies. The following eight aspects of social media are driving changes in the society⁷:

The first change specific to social media is the anonymity of its agents, which means that those who write and comment often use nicknames or aliases. Even though anonymity provides an opportunity to comment on delicate issues, it can also sometimes lead to “flame wars” and avoiding responsibility.

The second change is the richness and diversity of information social media provide. Users are no longer dependent on a single source for their news and other data any more, but can flexibly use several different media side by side. The *modus operandi* can be thought of as remediation, where media use, modify and reorganise contents gathered from other media. Also connected to this changed information environment is the fact that it is not possible to participate in every conversation.

The third change is omnipresence – there are no longer any isolated places or hiding holes. The private and public lives of society's most influential figures have merged and become public space. Many a politician has had to face the fact that a phrase taken out of context or a joke they told during a private conversation has been recorded by outsiders and quickly made public on the Internet.

The fourth change is speed. News and information are spread more quickly than ever before, and the demand for speed can also lead to reports without any confirmation.

The fifth change is the multitude of roles that users assume, and their relationships to each other. The lack of a clear hierarchy is characteristic of social media. A good example is the online encyclopedia, Wikipedia, which doesn't really have a main editor, but an army of tens of thousands of writers, inspectors, and editors. So, if inaccuracies are found, to whom at Wikipedia should complaints be directed? The answer to this: don't complain! Instead, supplement the article in question and correct perceived mistakes alone.

The sixth change is the move from objectivity to subjectivity. For example, in the United States, some of the so-called traditional mainstream media have abandoned the promotion of equality and pluralism.

The seventh change is the new ability to combine different kinds of recorded information in very flexible ways.

Social media isn't just text, pictures, audio, video, and animation, but all of these combined. With today's compact video cameras, sound recorders, laptop computers and other mobile devices, combined with affordable soft ware, one can easily create and edit impressive presentations.

The eighth change is the near absence of traditional methods of regulation. A government can attempt to restrict

the content of social media, but traditional censorship cannot keep up with ever-changing web pages.

3. The Social Media and Marketing

With over 1.2 Billion active users, Facebook provides a virtual reality in cyberspace where users can enact identities for their friends, acquaintances, and a larger passing public. The social media revolution has given consumers around the world the most powerful voice they've ever had. It has also forced companies to think about how they can be more transparent and responsive. Social media, along with a global recession, has led companies, organizations, and governments to figure out how to accomplish more with less money—to get their messages out there and talked about, without spending as many dollars on declining media like television, radio, and print.

Word-of-mouth marketing has always been considered the purest and best form of marketing, and social media has continued to prove this fact in many ways. People like to share with and feel connected to each other, brands, organizations, and even governments they like and trust.

Facebook's Like button, introduced in April 2010, has already been added by more than three million distinct websites. The Like button allows Facebook's more than one billion users, with one click, to express approval of companies, organizations, articles, or ideas. Whether it's a friend's picture of her baby you *like*, an article shared from the *New York Times*, a video from a local organization, or a contest from a global brand, the Like button gets more than two billion clicks per day.

Yet, as astounding as these numbers are, it's the new personalization of the Web that matters most in the social media revolution, both to companies and consumers. It's Facebook's ability to show you exactly what your friends and friends of

friends *like* that makes the *like* function such a powerful tool. If you have a new baby, for example, you don't care what stroller is advertised on television, and, in fact, you probably don't care if 50, 500, or 5,000 people *like* a new stroller on Facebook. But if a friend of yours *likes* that stroller, you are more likely to feel that you can trust the company that made the item and are comfortable buying,

Facebook isn't the only social network to adopt a "like" feature, either. YouTube, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Instagram, and foursquare have all added their own functionality that allows users to express approval of content, and Twitter has a Favorite button that allows users to approve of specific tweets. Content, companies, products, and ideas judged likeable by people you know and trust can be easily found throughout today's Internet. Companies and professionals who are worthy of people clicking their Like button will, in the short term, build trust and, in the long term, win the new Web in their respective categories.

4. Matrimonial Sites as Channels to Befriend Couples

Almost around the same time as the Internet boom began in India, the online matrimonial portals also came into existence. Contrary to expectations and surpassing the apprehensions, online matrimonial portals clicked. Online matrimonial portals were just the most needed oxygen for young boys, girls and their families. The space was more democratic when compared to the tedious route of matchmaking through uncles, aunties and neighbours. Matrimonial sites were conveniently anonymous, and could turn familiar when things moved from one stage to another.

Soon, the data analytics companies entered the fray. Online matrimonial sites became data-mining sites and spaces which gave deeper meaning to the 'fields' to collect data. For, when

the match was made, or the recommendation would be sent, the final result was the human meeting where a thousand things could go wrong. And, if they went right, the success would belong to the website that brought a good pair of individuals together. A country that believes in marriages are premeditated coming together of couples, their stars, their horoscopes and their families, has to rely on highly precise data to make this happen on the Internet. Online portals such as shaadi.com, bharatmatrimony.com, secondshaadi.com, jeevansaathi.com, shubhlaabhm matrimony.com among a few thousands of such dedicated spaces, started their journey much earlier and learnt along the way. They were dynamic and open for learning along the route.

As a result of this, today matrimony has turned into a huge business opportunity for budding e-entrepreneurs. The sector, right now, has a Rs 520-crore market, which will soon see a huge expansion in the coming days. For, it is clocking a compounded growth rate of 65% annually, according to ASSOCHAM survey conducted in 2013.

Apart from single men and women registering themselves online, the challenge of matchmaking is huge both in terms of data and logistics. With about 8,000 new members registering themselves every day, the number gets more tedious and difficult for mining and matching, if the technology used remains dated. As a result, both economics and technology of this matchmaking business constantly undergo changes, and mostly for better with more number of users entering the Internet space. One of the main reasons attributed to the growth of online matrimony business is the time efficiency and convenience that's a boon for those in search of partners for self or others.

The reason behind the success and the need of matrimonial websites is more predictable than any other social concept that prevails across countries. Arranged marriage has always

been a norm in India, with love marriages upsetting the social equilibrium. Culture and mutual understanding between the couple hold keys to a lot of situations which can blow up in the face. Moreover, marriage in India is never between two persons. It is always a give-and-take relationship between two families of similar background and economic status.

5. Social Media in Elections

Barack Obama's 2008 US presidential campaign has often been described as the first electoral campaign in which the use of social media had a decisive impact. The 2008 US presidential campaign had a huge presence on social networking sites. Barack Obama, a virtually unknown Democratic candidate, utilized 15 different social media websites to form relationships with the millions of American citizens who utilize those networks. His social networking profile pages were constantly being updated and interacting with followers. By the end of his campaign, Obama had 5 million social media network supporters. The use of social networking sites in his marketing campaign gave Barack Obama's campaign access to e-mail addresses, as posted on social network profile pages. This allowed the Democratic Party to launch e-mail campaigns asking for votes and campaign donations.

The "Arab Spring" uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, have proven that social media can be used to transform society and politics on a global scale. These uprisings used social media to organize protests, highlight injustices and government crackdowns, and sway public opinion at home and abroad. The effects spread to other nations, as even now, several nations in the Middle East find the status quo challenged by youths and social activists who use social media to rally others to their cause. In response, some countries have tried, often unsuccessfully, to limit access to social media sites, but these

efforts just go to prove the staying power of the internet and social media as a tool for social change.

For generations, if a person wasn't at an event alive, the only way they would hear about it would be from the news media. This worked well enough when you consider how things were before, but the side effect was that a few gatekeepers controlled what images people saw, what news stories were covered, and from what angle. Now that social media sites let people from all over the world share their story through videos and images, it has changed the way people get their news and think about news in general. It has become a big issue for governments or organizations that want to hide the truth behind the veil of official secrets. Exposés from behind closed doors and aired on channels like YouTube have forced changes in ways that traditional media couldn't because they lacked access.

6. Abuse of Social Media

As the social networking is being increasingly used as an education and information resource, we have to decide how to make it a non-abuse place for our society. Pornography, violence, obscenity and hatred lurk in unexpected places, and innocent children stumble upon them all too frequently. It is not the problem of parents and their children only, but employees viewing and trading pornographic, offensive or otherwise unproductive material has also emerged as a key concern of many business managers. Not only are these activities wasteful of time and resources in themselves, they may also involve the employer in legal issues. The ease of access and distribution of these materials makes these issues all too common in daily business.

It is clearly evident that social media is a very powerful means of exercising one's freedom of speech and expression. However, it is also been increasingly used for illegal acts which has given force to the Government's attempts at censoring

social media. Some of the misuses of social media are listed below:

a. Social Networking Addiction

Social networking addiction has become increasingly debated among experts. With recent abilities to become even more connected with user-friendly platforms, the ability to become addicted to social networking sites is becoming even more plausible. In a PDF research document entitled “Always Connected, How Smartphones and Social Media Keep Us Engaged,” Facebook and IDC tracked the habits of almost 7,500 U.S. smartphone users over a week in March 2013. In just a short space of time, these users now find Facebook as an almost as popular and meaningful way of staying connected with friends and family as using the phone to talk or send texts. Some 84% of communication is done through text, email or social means, leaving the phone bit of the smartphone at only 16%.

In the case of social media websites, what hooks people is the rush they get from social recognition, the thrill of getting a ‘like’ or a re-tweet. That ‘social high’ causes addictive personalities to check their Facebook, Instagram and Twitter timelines every few minutes. But as soon as they hit one level of social recognition, they want to go one level higher. Suddenly, it’s no longer enough to have five friends laugh at your clever turn of phrase or status on Facebook; it has to be at least 50. And when you hit 50, then it has to be 100. And so it goes.

But what’s wrong with all this, you might ask? At the end of the day, nobody gets hurt if somebody spends too much time on Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat or Twitter. Unfortunately, people do get hurt — just not visibly. In the obvious sense, a person who is so obsessed with their Facebook status that

they have to check it every few minutes is not going to be very productive at work.

There are other losses as well. Take, for example, the selfie obsession that has taken social media by storm. Unattractive and equally unnecessary, these selfies are taken anywhere and everywhere.

Social networking addiction is a behavioral addiction. Because social networking interaction can lead to elevation in moods, one may make the connection that social networking addiction is a disease. According to Rose, “the following are some of the most categorized symptoms of social networking addiction:⁸

- Your social networking activities cause you to neglect your obligations such as housework, school work, and work.
- You hide the truth about how much time you’re online.
- You lose track of time when you’re on sites like Twitter.
- Your social networking activities have caused negative issues at work or school, yet you continue those activities.
- Updating your Facebook status (how you’re feeling) replaces ‘talking it out’ with friends or family.
- You sleep less, and avoid sleep regardless of fatigue, too spend time on sites like Facebook.
- Your discussions (offline) tend to include your posts, or the post of others, more than conversations about the other aspects of your life.

- You have gnawing feelings of guilt and shame over the amount of networking use.
- You become agitated or have mood swings when you're forced to spend periods of time away from social networks.
- You devote increased thoughts to what activities are, or could be going on, on Friendster or Twitter when you are not on them.
- You create an enhanced online personality-unrelated to your real person.
- You increasingly share information or become apart of online activities and discussions you KNOW are dangerous.
- You create an enhanced online personality-unrelated to your real person.
- You lie about relationships or children to encourage more interaction online by other users.
- You spend more time socializing online, and begin to avoid person to person interactions.
- You prefer interactions on social networking sites over various intimacies with your partner.
- You are too preoccupied with the posts of those you follow.
- You begin to lie in order to add excitement to your Facebook and Twitter wall.

- You define yourself, or feel inflated and deeply saddened, by the number of friends or followers you have collected.

b. Cyberbullying

One problem with social networking is that it can lead to cyber bullying, which affects students in and out of school. Cyber bullying is a hard concept to define as more and more technology becomes available to children.

Cyber bullying is also complicated because there is direct cyber bullying, which most of us think of when we think of cyber bullying, but there is also cyber bullying by proxy, or indirect cyber bullying. The proxy bullying involves using other people to help cyber bully a victim, sometimes without the accomplice actually knowing what they are doing. It essentially is getting someone else to do the dirty work in bullying. Cyber Bullying by proxy also can occur when someone hacks into a victim's account of some type and uses it to send out inappropriate content to the victim's friends and contacts.

What really distinguishes cyber bullying from "playful teasing" is the aggressive intent behind the bullying. But again what makes it complicated is intent can be in the eye of the beholder, and someone can always claim they "were just joking." But a basic definition of cyber bullying is when someone bullies someone else through the use of technology. The cyber bullying exists on a continuum of severity. When the bullying is on the lesser end of the spectrum it is very hard to identify that it is bullying. But on the more extreme end cyber bullying has led to murder and suicide.

Types and Methods of Cyber Bullying⁹

- **Flaming** - Flaming is a brief, heated exchange that happens between two or more people using some sort of communication technology. It usually happens in a public space like chat rooms or discussion groups, rather than in private discussions like emails .
- **Harassment** - These are words, conduct, or actions being directed at a specific person with the intent to annoy, alarm, or cause emotional distress in that person. It is usually repeated messages or actions against one person.
- **Denigration** - This is information about someone that is derogatory and untrue. Online it can be posted to a website, sent via email, or messaged to someone else. This also included sending or sharing photos of someone that portrays them in a sexual or harmful manner. Online “slam books” which are created in order to make fun of others are also forms of denigration.
- **Impersonation** - This is when a person pretends to be another person, usually by using the victim’s password to gain access to their accounts. They then send communication to others that is usually cruel, negative, or inappropriate, posing as that person. In more extreme cases, impersonation has lead to someone giving out where a person lives to the wrong people, in order for them to be track down by said people.
- **Outing and Trickery** - Outing is sharing personal, and sometimes embarrassing, information with others who were not meant to learn that information. Trickery is tricking someone into revealing personal information, and then sharing that information with others.

- **Exclusion/Ostracism** - Children, like most people, just want to be a part of a group and fit in with others. Being excluded can be seen as “social death,” and people can be excluded using online methods. The online exclusion could be being locked out of a password protected chat space, or just being de-friended on Facebook.
- **Cyber Stalking** - This is stalking via the use of electronic communication using repetitive harassing and threatening communication.
- **Happy Slapping** - This is a fairly new method of cyber bullying that has become popular in England. People, usually teens walk up and slap someone, while another person uses a phone or camera to record the incident. The video is then put on the internet for others to see, even though the victim may not be aware of it.

c. Commodification of Identity

In today's economy, identity information often is viewed as a valuable commodity. Businesses desire to advertise their products to the markets most interested in them, and may even retool their products to be more appealing to certain segments of a market. Knowing the preferences of individuals allows a corporation to target perfectly their products to those who would prefer and, thus, be most likely to purchase, them. Making a detailed survey of an individual's preferences, though, is very difficult, if not impossible. Often an individual cannot specify the exact motivation for her purchase of a particular product. From the seller's perspective, determining which questions to ask purchasers can be a daunting task. Further, certain questions, despite their potential usefulness, are not likely to be answered by a purchaser. To work around this problem, businesses use identity information as a proxy for preferences.

As a result, many businesses collect information about identity as part of its transactions. A purchase order form may ask for an address, occupation, and income level. Stores may ask individuals to relinquish portions of their identity in exchange for goods and services. For example, customers may be offered special discounts or free products if they complete a survey. Similarly, a customer may be asked to complete a registration form detailing her reading and television-viewing habits in order to receive a card entitling the customer to a discount. The business creates a database using the information from these forms and the names of the products that were purchased. Hoping to develop a more accurate profile of their customers -- in essence, hoping to learn the full identity of the average consumer, businesses sell or rent portions of their databases to other businesses. Conceivably, if enough vendors collaborate, a “profile” of buyers may be created without the consumers express permission or knowledge. The information is then used to guide the direct marketing of other products to customers or the retooling of current products. It also could be used to identify those people who have a high probability of not paying their bills. Such databases stand to threaten the privacy interests of consumers, especially for those purchasing legal, but socially stigmatized, products like pornography.

d. Surveillance Society, Transparent Society

While concealing one’s identity might be easy to do online, it is a feeble defense against the predations of government and corporate power in real life. Though the digital identity might go to great extremes to protect their real identity when they are online, the real world they live in is becoming a surveillance society. With the belief that surveillance is synonymous with security, the world could enter into a surveillance society. The appetite for information and willingness to be monitored seems to characterise the modern world as an information society.

The rise of the surveillance society, would seem like a science fiction depiction of the future; however the surveillance society already arrived some time ago. Many civil rights activists fear that the power and authority can be misused, and can take away civil liberties formally enjoyed by citizens of democracies. However not all interpretations of the surveillance society are negative, some theorists have optimistic views on the surveillance society. The opposite of a transparent or open society is a secretive society that protects not only citizens but the larger powers, such as world governments, businesses and the criminal underworld.

e. Manipulation of Social Networking Sites for Commerce

Social networking websites allow individuals and businesses to interact with one another and build relationships and communities online. When companies join these social channels, consumers can interact with them directly. That interaction can be more personal to users than traditional methods of outbound marketing and advertising.

Social networking sites act as word of mouth or more accurately, e-word of mouth. Social networking sites and blogs allow followers to “retweet” or “repost” comments made by others about a product being promoted, which occurs quite frequently on some social media sites. By repeating the message, the user’s connections are able to see the message, therefore reaching more people. Because the information about the product is being put out there and is getting repeated, more traffic is brought to the product/company. They allow consumers to express their needs, wants and values, online. Social media marketing then connects these consumers and audiences to businesses that share the same needs, wants and values.

Through social networking sites, companies can interact with individual followers. This personal interaction can instill a feeling of loyalty into followers and potential customers. Also, by choosing whom to follow on these sites, products can reach a very narrow target audience.

Social networking sites also include much information about what products and services prospective clients might be interested in. Through the use of new semantic analysis technologies, marketers can detect buying signals, such as content shared by people and questions posted online. Understanding of buying signals can help sales people target relevant prospects and marketers run micro-targeted campaigns.

Social networking is used by 76% of businesses today. Business retailers have seen 133% increases in their revenues from social media marketing.

7. Conclusion

Social media has come as a blessing for be-friending the other in many areas of life- for building community, for sharing interests, for selling and marketing, for political activism, for getting help in need, for teaching and learning, etc. On the other hand, it has generated new problems and challenges which can alienate others. Some of those challenges are :

Networking addiction which can be harmful for the user , Cyber bullying which can destroy the other, Mislead unsuspecting persons for predation, Create a surveillance society where privacy is lost and Misuse social media for commodification.

Notes

1. Boyd, D. M., & Ellison, N. B. (2008). "Social network sites: Definition, history and scholarship." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13, 210-213
2. Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). "The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation." *Psychological Bulletin*, 117(3), 497-529.
3. Whiting, A., & Williams, D. (2013). "Why people use social media: A uses and gratifications approach." *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 16(4), 362-369.
4. Van Baren, J., IJsselsteijn, W.A., Markopoulos, P., Romero, N., de Ruyter, B. (2004). "Measuring Affective Benefits and Costs of Awareness Systems Supporting Intimate Social Networks." in: A. Nijholt, & T. Nishida, (Eds.), *Proceedings of 3rd workshop on social intelligence design. CTIT Workshop Proceedings Series WP04-02* (pp. 13-19).
5. Baker, H. S., & Baker, M. N. (1987). "Heinz Kohut's self-psychology: An overview." *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, 144, 1-8.
6. Marshal McLuhan. *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man*, University of Toronto Press, 1962.
7. "Social Media - The New Power of Political Influence," Centre for European Studies, www.thinkingeurope.eu.
8. Rose, S. (2009, August 2). *Social Networking Addiction: Do you need detox from facebook and twitter?* http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/2014392/social_networking_addiction_pg3.html?cat=72.
9. Kowalski, R., Limber, S., and Agaston, P. (March 17, 2008). *Cyber Bullying: The New Moral Frontier*. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/book/10.1002/9780470694176>.

Article received: Feb 24, 2016

Article approved: Aug 4, 2016

No of words: 6493