

Resistance is Not Futile! - Unpacking Privacy Concerns of Resistors, Dropouts, and Lurkers

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ABSTRACT

Popularity of Facebook as the premier social media platform attained a milestone in 2015 with it reaching one billion users. Over time different social networking websites have sprung up, with each media platform trying to adjust and orient themselves to their user base. In this study, we investigated why the social media users are altering their online behavior, including curtailing their use, prowling around, and abandoning it all together. We created a pre-screening survey, where 248 participants responded, this led us to interview 22 participants (17 had Facebook accounts, 5 didn't have Facebook accounts). We specially selected participants who don't have a Facebook account or have curtailed their use in the last year. We found many common dissatisfaction characteristics, such as- superficial communication over social media, displaying aversive behavior towards polarizing contents, dissatisfaction with the over-sharing nature of Facebook users. The subjective investigation provided certainties that individuals are decreasing their usage and contributed more on the grounds which can lie anyplace between the adjustments in Facebook itself to individual personality change.

ACM Classification Keywords

H.5.m. Information Interfaces and Presentation (e.g. HCI): Miscellaneous; See <http://acm.org/about/class/1998/> for the full list of ACM classifiers. This section is required.

Author Keywords

Human Factors, Social Media

INTRODUCTION

Society has changed in the past few decades in terms of communication as the influence of social media perpetually increases. The line between internet usage and social media usage is blurring with every passing day, it is mentioned that by 2020, 7 out of every 10 US internet users will be connected over social media¹. Many people join for the community that

social media provides through constant updated status reports. Social media also allows users to communicate with free instant messaging and group chats, which obviously overrules the option to pay for regular service text messaging plans.

Facebook, one of the most popular social media platforms, launched in 2004 and after giving public access to users in 2006 has come a long way in reaching billion users in 2015². It has become a worldwide phenomenon, having become the most popular website in more countries than any other platform for social media, and it has the statistics to prove it. Every 60 seconds there are 510 comments made on Facebook, as well as 293,000 statuses made, and 136,000 photos are uploaded [4]. Over the years, it has ruled the social media industry, as of 2016, 79% of internet users (68% of all U.S. adults) use Facebook [4]. Many other social media websites have joined the league such as- Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, etc. With the competition getting increased, the survival in the market becomes challenging and many modifications have been observed from various aspects in the Facebook, including the website's interface, the company privacy policies, the usage of the users, etc. One of the reasons social media has become an integral part of an individual's life is the self-representation of one, creating an online presence. Different social media websites have different purposes, such as- LinkedIn is used to maintain professional connection, some other social media websites such as Tinder is supposed to be a dating website. Ellison et.al. noted these social media websites not only help to connect, but help in developing relationships with one's connection either personal or professional [2].

Despite several benefits of staying connected over social media, along with joining the social media community, users often experience an underlying effect of pressure to join a social media platform. Since being a part of a virtual community is so prominent in our society, joining has become the usual and anything different may seem odd. Therefore, it can be important for individuals to fit in and in-turn create a profile on social media. Several studies indicate that social media usage is decreasing over time. Gillette mentioned that Facebook usage have been reduced over time and users have been shifting to other social media websites [3]. Articles have been published mentioning how the death of Facebook is a gift in disguise in terms of privacy and security features³. This

¹<https://contently.com/strategist/2017/04/19/social-media-trends-2017/>

²<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Facebook>

³<https://www.dailydot.com/via/killing-facebook-dependency-monopoly/>

indicates privacy is an important feature when we consider getting connected over social media and more people are getting considerate about the trade-off between privacy and staying connected with their Friends. These articles refer *agent of chaos* despite the several social benefits it provides.

While much of the research explores why Internet users go to Facebook as their main social media platform, we wish to explore why users may choose to limit their usage, deactivate, or delete their account, or just abandon using the platform altogether. There is no denying that Facebook is the most popular of all the social media platforms to exist today. In the second quarter of 2017, there are about 1.74 billion monthly active users and there are 2 billion monthly active users for the same time period⁴. While Facebook was not the first social media platform to become popular on the Internet, it did help alleviate a lot of the problems that sites like Myspace had and we wish to explore whether Facebook is following the same trend of decline. However, Facebook's User Interface was easier to understand, and connecting with people on the platform was also considerably easier. This helped Facebook grow as a social platform, where now about half of adult users on Facebook have 200 users in their friend list. Facebook is so popular that even non-users can have a hard time escaping the site.

In our study, we wanted to explore more on the this and the primary contribution of our work is that we conduct detailed interviews, albeit on a smaller scale, to corroborate the growing disillusionment of many users with Facebook and investigate the reasons thereof. This is of significance, especially in today's context where Facebook, a social media platform, has emerged as an indispensable medium for communication in the online world.

Facebook in fact has scored low in customer satisfaction surveys, with users reporting issues with privacy, interface changes, and spam as common problems. Facebook has received much criticism in regards to its handling of user data and privacy. Sophos mentioned that businesses see Facebook as the most dangerous social media site for user security, with 60% of businesses believing that it was more dangerous than Myspace, Twitter, and LinkedIn⁵. Criticisms about its usage of user data has been so harsh, that in the past Facebook has been ranked in the bottom 5% of private sector companies in user satisfaction [4]. In 2011, the American Customer Satisfaction Index listed Facebook as having a score of 64 out of 100, putting it in the same range as the IRS's e-filing system, airline sites, and cable companies [5]. Researches have indicated that users are getting concerned about the negative effects of social media and how it is degrading their physical and mental health [1]. The main aim of our research is to unravel these causes which might be triggering such non-use behavior of the users.

Our study focuses on answering the following research question:

⁴<https://www.statista.com/statistics/264810/number-of-monthly-active-facebook-users-worldwide/>

⁵<https://www.sophos.com/en-us/security-news-trends/security-trends/network-security-top-trends.aspx>

RQ1. What are the factors that contribute to non-use and disengagement from social media?

RQ2. What privacy concerns effect an individual's social media behavior?

We tackled the above research questions by conducting a pre-screening survey, where 248 participants responded. Out of the 248 responses, we selected 22 participants for the interviews who specifically mentioned they do not have Facebook account or have curtailed their usage since last year. Based on our analysis, we make the following contributions:

- We describe user experience of Facebook and social media in general. Our main focus was to explore why users are curtailing or abandoning Facebook.
- We uncovered the reasons why users stay connected virtually and choose to not produce any content themselves. We explored how the social media modifications indicates such changes, or is it personal changes which can be the causative agent here. We also found out how privacy and security becomes a deciding factor when online behavior is considered.
- We developed an exhaustive coding scheme of the detailed interviews to create a list of reasons that can be a primary cause of user's behavior online apart from privacy concerns.
- We suggest changes that can be effective both from the user's and Facebook's perspective to improve user experience without compromising on their privacy.

In the next section, we summarize prior research on the reasons of dissatisfaction of social media often leading to the reduction in usage if not leaving it all together. We then outline the method in section ?? we used to conduct our study along with the details of participant recruitment and a description of the sample. Next, we describe our findings in section ?? followed by a discussion of the insight that emerged. We proceed to apply the insight to suggest a number of potential improvements to Facebook, its user experience, and other related aspects in the section ???. We conclude in the section ?? after pointing out important limitations and avenues for future work in section ??. We have also provided the pre-screening questions and semi-structured interview questions in the Appendix..

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