

Reader's Guide to Social Media's Impact on Society

Edited by Hailey R. Hawkins



This guide will introduce you to the advantages and disadvantages of social networking sites and give readers a better understanding of the unintended effects social media has on adolescents. In this reader's guide you will find a collection of sources, definitions of key terms and analysis of the editor's research. I hope you learn about the true power of technology from the many perspectives illustrated in the conversation. Bonus features of this ebook include entering the scholarly conversation and the editor's projected inquiry to explore new concepts that have furthered the editor's research.

Table of Contents

<u>Cover Page</u>	1
<u>Table of Contents</u>	2
<u>Editor's Introduction</u>	3
Are We Becoming too Dependent on our Devices?	
What is Social Media?	
The Truth Behind My Social Media Experience	
News Sharing Across the Globe	
Moving Forward	
<u>Collection of Sources</u>	7
<u>Glossary of Key Terms</u>	16
<u>About the Editor</u>	17
BONUS CONTENT	
<u>Scholarly Conversation</u>	18
Gap in the Conversation- Where Do We Draw the Line?	
<u>Editor's Projected Inquiry/Conclusion</u>	22
We Opened a New Door	

Editor's Introduction

Are We Becoming Too Dependent on our Devices?

Billions of people all over the world use social media to stay connected and share information regardless of location. Social media has become an everyday aspect of our lives and it has transformed the lives of the youth. Adolescents are growing up in a world that is immersed in social media and clearly, it has become a huge influence on society. Experts say social media can be psychologically damaging but the effects are still unclear. There are many dangers to online overexposure and adolescents are at high risk for developing anxiety and depression while using social media sites. It can be problematic for adolescents, explained further in <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/03/well/family/teenagers-social-media.html> due to social pressures and seeking approval from their peers. It is difficult for teens to find support online and escape negative content. For many of us, we use our devices right before we go to bed and immediately check our phones once we wake up. This shows just how addicted we are to social media whether you realize it or not.

What is Social Media?

Many of you are familiar with social media platforms, but let's dive a little deeper. Social media is advanced technology that allows users to share information, posts and ideas through virtual communities. Social networking sites provide users with efficient electronic communication. This includes messaging, photo sharing and video uploading. Content can either be private or public and shared with large audiences. Today, the most popular social media sites are Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, YouTube, TikTok and Pinterest. There are many pros and cons to social media and how it relates to the youth, for example this study; [Positive and Negative](#)

[Effects of Social Media](#) describes what the advantages and disadvantages are. Social media brings people together worldwide and promotes the exchange of ideas regardless of location.

The Truth Behind My Social Media Experience

Social media has always been a fun way for me to connect with my peers and family and share images depicting my life. I spent my free time thoughtlessly scrolling through instagram pages to see what other people were up to in their lives. But I never stopped to think about how this may be affecting my own view of myself. I have never been one to get caught up in what my peers are doing or what is considered as a popular trend. However, over time I found myself going down the social media hole. I've always felt happy in my own skin but now I felt like I had to constantly meet high standards. I wanted to show the best version of myself to the world, but I mean who doesn't right? We all get transfixed in today's beauty standards but the sad truth is that it's fake! By the time you wash away all the fine tuning, editing, and photoshop the only thing that is left is a human being. I learned that at the end of the day it's the camera angles and airbrushed skin doing the trick. I soon realized that I couldn't compete with photoshopped celebrities who are seen as icons but in reality are nothing more than real people with real problems. I wasn't going to compare myself with stick-thin trained models who probably suffer from eating disorders. This should not be the norm!! It's unrealistic and every woman should feel beautiful in their own bodies. I once was trapped in getting the right angle too. I figured why not take a thousand pictures and choose the best one. In fact, eventually I found myself only posting pictures that had some sort of filter. Lucky for me, I am not someone who cares deeply about what other people think of me. But I can only imagine how bad this must have affected other teenage girls who have a distorted view of themselves. Now I know that my worth is not in my

appearance but who I am within. A person's true inner beauty shines through and comes from the heart.

News Sharing Across the Globe

Social media is essential in the distribution of information. Social media gives anyone the opportunity to share their views and opinions, no matter their culture, religion, race or gender. The media has increased social, economic and political importance as seen in [News sharing in social media](#) where the authors reflect on the gratifications, motivations and online experience users get from news sharing . Social media effects can't be determined by focusing solely on a single country or even on various countries. But social media may be more influential in countries that don't have free press. Countries without independent press rely on social media to get their information and it may be their only form of political engagement. Social networking is important internationally because it allows the coordination of political activities. It is a great way to exchange ideas, promote discovery, spark political discussion and gather support.

Moving Forward

Social media can be incredibly powerful and remarkable change can occur when people come together to support those in need. We should use social media to make a difference in the world and spark change within society. There have been many inspiring stories such as <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2017/04/social-media-rhino-rescue/> where social media platforms have been used for good. It is hard to believe that in today's world if there is a problem, we can fix it no matter how far away it is. There are important issues that even I can make an impact on just by the click of a button. Imagine the outcome if the world focused on

using social media as a positive influence. Social media is constantly evolving, but there will always be room for improvement.

Collection of Sources

Reference Entry:

Ahn, June. "The Effect of Social Network Sites on Adolescents' Social and Academic Development: Current Theories and Controversies." *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, vol. 62, no. 8, 2011, pp. 1435–1445

Hyperlink:

["What are Social Network Sites and How Do Youth Use Them?"](#)

Summary:

The author, June Ahn describes the effects of social media on the youth. She introduces social networks as a way of efficient communication. This includes messaging, photo sharing and video uploading that teens use for human interaction. She is targeting adolescents who commonly use social platforms to transverse with friends. When a user posts personal content on their profile, it can either be private or public and shared with large audiences. Developing social identity as an adolescent is crucial but teenagers tend to use social media to judge others and gain popularity. June Ahn incorporates studies that have shown that digital divides among adolescents are unusual. However, there are correlations between race, gender and demographic areas and the increased use of social networking sites. SNS communities influence how the youth interacts and behaves. Social networks have even been linked to higher levels of self-esteem and evidence suggests that social communities form social capitals. While there are many concerns regarding the effects of social media on the youth, research shows there are many positives. This article

brings attention to concerns of forming online relationships and how to use these platforms safely.

Reference Entry:

Akram, W., and R. Kumar. "A Study on Positive and Negative Effects of Social Media on Society." *International Journal of Computer Sciences and Engineering*, vol. 5, no. 10, 2017, pp. 347–354

Hyperlink:

[Positive and Negative Effects of Social Media](#)

Summary:

Akram and Kumar highlight the many benefits of social media as it's a way to bring people together worldwide. These platforms allow people with differences to connect and discuss new ideas regardless of location. It provides those support systems who need it and is a great way to share information and stay educated on important topics. Advertising is a good way to promote products that appeal to large populations. Businesses take advantage of social networking sites to broadly target customers. This article illustrates how social media can be a powerful tool to spark change within society. The authors depict how the internet can be a dangerous place because social platforms have the gossip to prove it. Networking gives anyone access, which means that hacking and fraud are frequent. Personal online profiles and security information can be hacked and shared throughout the internet. Cyber harassing is a growing issue and is prevalent among the youth. Teenage jealousy can motivate hateful comments to be said about someone else, since

it's easier to hide behind a screen. The media is forever, and this isn't always a good thing, what you post even after it's been deleted can sometimes be recovered. A negative image or comment can instantly ruin a person's reputation as it can quickly spread throughout the internet. If teens are aware of these negative influences, then they're more likely to have positive online experiences and interactions.

Reference Entry:

Boulianne, Shelley (2019) Revolution in the making? Social media effects across the globe, *Information, Communication & Society*, 22:1, 39-54

Hyperlink:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epub/10.1080/1369118X.2017.1353641?needAccess=true>

Summary:

The author, Shelley Boulianne discusses whether the effects of social media are truly revolutionary in cross-sectional studies that assess the relationship between social media and participation. Social media sites are commonly used to engage people in political campaigns and social movements. The participation of political expression on social media is more popular than information seeking. Countries without an independent press use social media for informational purposes. The United States has the most political participation on social media since there is free press. Boulianne examines results from cross-sectional studies across the globe. Numerous meta-analysis studies differentiated social media usage for news, building relationships or political expression. The effects of these social media activities must be measured on different

scales to determine their impact on participation. Social media tends to expose people to information regarding political issues and current events. This makes them more knowledgeable about the issues and raises their political engagement. Networking is used to form social ties which increase the chances of participation. Meta-analysis claims differ between whether informational effects or networking effects are the strongest on social media. The theory is that if you're actively participating online then it will increase the likelihood of your political expression offline.

Reference Entry:

Crone, E.A., Konijn, E.A. Media use and brain development during adolescence. *Nat Commun* 9, 588 (2018)

Hyperlink:

<https://rdcu.be/b9CxB>

Summary:

The authors, Crone and Konijn research how social media influences the development of the regions of the brain associated with social interactions. In today's world adolescents are growing up in a society that is immersed in social media and the effects are unclear. This article sheds light on how the media can impact neurological development. The current generation is living in an era where social media is everything and practically woven into their social life. Adolescents go through a huge developmental period where it is crucial to gain approval from your peers. Social media can heighten emotional sensitivity thus influencing how the youth processes online

content. Exploring social media usage can provide helpful feedback and allow scientists to make real connections by finding patterns. Functional magnetic resonance imaging has found brain changes in adolescents over time. Neurons in the brain grow in number with age and during teenage years synaptic pruning occurs. Structural MRI research showed extensive changes in the human cortex during adolescence. Therefore, it is likely that social media is the underlying cause of these distinct changes in the brain regions involving social interaction. However, some individuals may be more susceptible to the consequences of the media. Neural responses to online acceptance and rejection show that social inclusion may protect adolescents from negative influences. Additionally, overexposure to online content can affect your mood, self-esteem and sleep patterns. Studies depicted that being rejected causes activity in areas of the brain associated with emotion. The results determined that adolescents show a sensitivity to “likes” by peers on social media and a stronger rejection expectation than adults.

Reference Entry:

Klass, P. (2019, June 03). When Social Media Is Really Problematic for Adolescents. Retrieved October 26, 2020

Hyperlink:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/03/well/family/teenagers-social-media.html>

Summary:

The author, Perri Klass wrote this article to highlight the mental health concerns that arise from social media usage. She wants to better our understanding of this dire public health matter. Klass

is trying to raise awareness of these social media worries to those who are already vulnerable. The study showed connections between social media and suicide and video games and violence. Boys traditionally had higher suicide rates, but the rate has increased for girls. Underlying problems may make some more at risk to what they find on social media. These issues include attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, social anxiety and depression. Another study found that when kids receive treatment for these disorders, the behaviors tend to vanish or become more controllable. Specialists discovered that how teens feel before going on social media affects how they will behave or react. The author is worried about adolescents and their relationship with social media since teenagers are still exploring their identity. Researchers are skeptical about what the emotional state of mind will look like for the next generation.

Reference Entry:

Lee, Chei Sian, and Long Ma. "News Sharing in Social Media: The Effect of Gratifications and Prior Experience." *Computers in Human Behavior*, vol. 28, no. 2, 2012, p. 331-339

Hyperlink:

[News sharing in social media](#)

Summary:

The authors, Lee and Ma depict the many ways of sharing content through social media. Sharing feedback and knowledge through collaboration helps build relationships with those who have similar interests. It is a great way to stay connected with the world around you. The media brings you unlimited information at the tip of your fingers. The news is a popular way to form

discussions within online communities. Social media allows people to participate in conversations, share their opinions and vote. Studies show an increase in political participation from reposting and retweeting. Mass media builds audience engagement through online sharing and has a direct influence on society. The authors portray how status seeking has a serious influence on the content sharing experience. The studies depict the gratification users gain through news sharing and status seeking. This article reveals the underlying intentions of why people share news. Gratifications have shown to encourage media usage and boost user engagement. Society views social platforms as a way to express opinions and gain social status. People are likely to have increased social media exposure when they are motivated by reputation. News sharing provides relevant information to users and allows them to stay up to date with current events. The purpose of this article and studies is to investigate the experiential factors in social media that influence news sharing.

Reference Entry:

Micu, C. C., Sciandra, M. R., & Micu, A. (2019). Understanding Social Media: The Effect of Belief Type and Product Type on Consumers' Social Media Use. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 27(1), 55-66

Hyperlink:

<https://www-tandfonline-com.librarylink.uncc.edu/doi/pdf/10.1080/10696679.2018.1534212?needAccess=true>

Summary:

The authors, Micu and Sciandra monitor the user engagement in Twitter, Facebook and YouTube to provide helpful feedback for marketers. Companies try to determine what products bring the most consumer engagement. Marketers want to identify what content has the most influence on consumers. Marketers compete with other brands to make their product the most popular on every platform. Each platform is different, but they all utilize user generated content. Users can display their interest for a brand by clicking the like button which helps industries determine if their product is doing well. This study examines how consumers evaluate goods and how it affects their behavior on social media. This article explores user generated content through utilitarian and hedonic products within each social media platform. Utilitarian products are used for reasonable benefits and hedonic products are used for satisfaction. The authors research how advertising and consumer behavior can sort products. This study provides precious information to marketers to help them better understand how to engage consumers.

Reference Entry:

Somvichian- Clausen, A. (2020, June 03). How Social Media Saved One of the World's Last Sumatran Rhinos. Retrieved October 27, 2020

Hyperlink:

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2017/04/social-media-rhino-rescue/>

Summary:

The author, Austa Somvichian- Clausen writes about how social media saved the life of Puntung, a Sumatran rhino. She mentions how a single tweet was spread around the globe and reposted by millions, resulting in better veterinarian care for a dangerously ill rhino. Sumatran rhinos are on the verge of extinction, in fact, there are less than 100 of them left in the world! This article highlights the importance of restoring the Sumatran rhino population before it's too late. This dire matter can only be achieved if we all come together to do what is right. Puntung was one of the last two female Sumatran rhinos in Malaysia and she was in critical condition. Another journalist, Adam Welz came across the link to the article and saw Puntung's life-threatening facial abscess. He soon realized that he had to save her! This wasn't just her life at stake, but the entire Sumatran rhino population could cease to exist. Welz contacted the "Saving the Survivors" non-profit organization who then connected with the "Borneo Rhino Alliance." Within 10 days a group of doctors had coordinated plans for the surgery and their international travels through WhatsApp. Performing surgery on Puntung to remove the abscess without killing her was a dauntless mission. The surgery was a success and just hours afterwards Puntung was already showing signs of improvement. The purpose of this article is to raise awareness for the Borneo Rhino Alliance and how they saved Puntung the rhino.

Glossary of Key Terms

Adolescents- in the process of developing from a child into an adult.

Blogging- a website that contains online personal reflections, comments, and often hyperlinks, videos, and photographs provided by the writer.

Communication- means of sending or receiving information, such as phone lines or computers.

Content Sharing- the strategic distribution of webpage and blog content across relevant social media such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn. The distribution with the intent of building engagement.

Cyberbullying- the use of electronic communication to bully a person, typically by sending messages of an intimidating or threatening nature.

Digital Divide- the gulf between those who have ready access to computers and the internet, and those who do not.

Marketing- the action or business of promoting and selling products or services, including market research and advertising.

Psychological Development- the development of human beings' cognitive, emotional, intellectual, and social capabilities and functioning over the course of a normal life span.

Shadow-ban- block (a user) from a social media site or online forum without their knowledge, typically by making their posts and comments no longer visible to other users.

Social Media Industry- websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking.

Social Networking- the use of dedicated websites and applications to interact with other users, or to find people with similar interests to oneself.

Technology- the application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes, especially in industry.

Virtual Communities- a community of people sharing common interests, ideas, and feelings over the internet.

About the Editor

Hailey R. Hawkins is a proud North Carolinian from Summerfield, NC and has lived in the same house for her entire life. She is the youngest in her family, which has its perks but has also shaped who she is today. She has a close relationship with her two older brothers, who she shares her fondest childhood memories with. Hailey is a wonderful aunt to her niece and two nephews. They are the highlight of her life. She has two small dogs, Lyla and Axel that bring her so much happiness. In her free time, she enjoys hiking, traveling and photography. Hailey is a first-year student at The University of North Carolina at Charlotte. She is currently majoring in Communication Studies and plans to one day work in Public Relations. Hailey thanks her professor who teaches the first-year writing course at UNCC for helping expand her knowledge about inquiry and developing her writing skills.



Scholarly Conversation

Gap in the Conversation: Where Do We Draw the Line?

I have emphasized how social media has opened the doors and given access to virtually unlimited material. The emphasis has been that it's been extremely powerful to educate people, provide entertainment, be a source of influence and it has even made careers for people.

All my assumptions have been this open access and what we're learning is that perhaps not all content is easily acceptable and it has become more exposed this year due to COVID-19, the election and unrest in the country. We've had social media companies having to testify in Washington about how they conduct business. They have been accused and verified that they block content. They have fact checkers that are operating offshore, and they are controlling the flow of information. While I support blocking information that is potentially fraudulent and dangerous, the reality is that they're limiting one of our country's most precious freedoms, The Freedom of free speech. And if opposing views are not equally attainable by the masses and really around the world, then people cannot be confident in the legitimacy of the material. Historically, societies have been destroyed when their citizens do not have freedom of speech and where information is limited or treated like government propaganda.

I've grown up with the wonders of social media and its influences. For the most part, as I've demonstrated it has had a favorable impact around the world. Clearly, I've reflected the unintended consequences when social media is misused or used as an outlet to bully or where adolescents are trying to meet unrealistic expectations based on retouched images and photoshop. I was fortunate enough that I had more exposure to the U.S Constitution and the

Federalist Papers as my brother in high school participated in an organization that debated the content of the Constitution both in state and in Washington DC. It's with this exposure and my multiple trips to Washington DC that provides me with a perspective which many of my peers may not have.

Now is a time where we all struggle with the advantages that are gained from social media yet must understand that any censorship of opposing views cannot be tolerated. This is extremely difficult to accomplish because on one hand you certainly want material censored that could cause harm, incite violence, or is not appropriate to be banned, but where do we draw the line? Who can you trust? Are media executives, politicians and opinion writers more equipped to determine what important information we view? Versus perhaps a scientist or an educator. I would prefer information that could indicate warning messages but be able to form my own opinions and use the world wide web in a way to find material which supports my opinions or opens my mind.

In fact, in my own experience this year taking a film class that has exposed atrocities around the world like gendercide, genocide, violating human rights, religious abuse and many other complex social issues. Had this material been censored, I would've never learned the value of what was happening in the world and I've taken use of this information. I feel so fortunate that I could view articles, laws, research papers, films and real changes demonstrated around the world. Shown by one small child, a director with the guts to make a movie or anyone passionate enough to tell their story. This is the power of easily available and open content. In many cases, truthfully this content was difficult to watch. It stirred emotion in me which I had never experienced before. Seeing the graphic content, the hardship, the tears and even hearing the wails

of innocence from these atrocities says it all. What if these cultures didn't want this to be exposed? And I expect that some didn't, just as I'm sure that there are cities in the U.S. today that don't want to show the violence taking place on their streets. That having said, only improvements can be made when the truth is revealed. Nevertheless, I am grateful because I have learned so much and I can champion values that are important to me.

Social media is not intended to sugar coat or just give you one point of view, it should be open and accessible. It has been so insightful for me to see some of these hearings where CEOs of Twitter and Facebook have been unable to articulate how their own companies distribute information. This is truly a double edge sword and I don't have an answer. This is something that even the world is currently struggling with. This is a case where technology has gotten ahead of the law and of the people. It is creating a huge ethical dilemma. A dilemma that will likely go on for years as society navigates the best way to approach the delivery of content. In an ideal world, we could trust that all content is factual and honest. But, that's not the real world, there is no magic wand or silver bullet to resolve this issue. This has been relatively new to me hearing terms like shadow banning, blocking or putting warnings on people's twitter messages. I find it egregious that personal accounts can be shut down for sharing differing opinions and viewpoints, knowing that the backbone of our constitution is the freedom of speech. I am proud that in America people can peacefully protest without repercussion. But sadly, it appears that while you can peacefully protest walking down the street with a sign, you possibly can't do the same thing on your own social media account. How can that be tolerated? I would rather have too much than too little information. It makes me think of when I would walk down the driveway and pick up the mail. My parents would sort it where a stack got filed, a stack got trashed or maybe even a

stack got shredded. But the point is that they made the decision. I would rather live in a society where I could open my mailbox and choose what I want to keep and what I want to throw away. I fear that we may be living in a time where the mail person makes the choice of what gets put in the mailbox.

Editor's Projected Inquiry/Conclusion

We Opened a New Door

Originally, I began researching to answer my question of how does social media truly impact society? Well, the answer is no one really knows what the future holds for this technology. Now I ask how is the social media industry changing? Social media is opening the world up to everyone. It's a relatively new technology and it will take additional years to truly understand the impact on society. And I expect it to be a whole new area of study. In fact, it's being used in a new way that was never imagined until 2020. Just with the Pandemic itself this technology is being used more broadly. Now we use it for virtual learning, virtual doctor's appointments, chat rooms and zoom calls on camera. We're having to use technology in a way we never thought possible. Elementary schoolers, middle schoolers, high schoolers, college students and employers are all using it. Everything has changed, even how we shop is online. We no longer look for products, products come to us. We've created new technologies to support businesses. Businesses explore and study the best way to keep customers, get customers and influence people. Companies will keep wondering how they can continue to use social media for advertising. As long as businesses have a desire to make money, there will always be a need to keep customers.

Social media personally impacted me this semester by doing everything virtual. The good was that I was able to complete college online but the bad was that I wasn't able to meet people and form new relationships. It became depressing staying in a lonely dorm room and I felt like I didn't get the true college experience. There is a need in my generation to post what they are doing all day long, whether it's a picture of your pet or what you're eating for dinner. We no

longer live in the moment. I even find myself looking for opportunities to share these images. For example, when my dogs were freshly groomed, I posted a picture of them for no other reason than that I thought they looked cute. Also, when I ate a fancy dinner I felt the urge to snap what I was having but in reality I don't eat like that every night. I feel compelled by the pressure to put something out there about my life. It's an interruption, I'm being flooded by images that are completely insignificant and it's becoming distracting. Only because people feel the need to share. In fact, my older brother and sister-in-law pointed out to me that just in a short period of time where they used the same technology to communicate, now my generation is only sending pictures back and forth, we don't even communicate anymore.

Everything is being touched by social media as it is the best way to receive and deliver information. It is how people learn, shop, work, even what charities they choose to donate to. Companies are constantly competing for the best reputation and reviews. Students who were worried about competing with kids in the classroom, now are comparing themselves to people around the world. On one hand I can appreciate what I have but, on the other hand I can see all that I don't have. And there's no more privacy anymore. Everyone is in everybody else's business which can lead to reputations being ruined. Images that are out there that will stay out there forever. You can't even make mistakes like you used too. Colleges and future employers can look at your past and images. We must be so careful!

Today, influences are across the globe. Where is this going? Next, will health care information be released to the public? This is just the beginning. The technology that knows what you buy on amazon is the same technology you use to buy your prescriptions. However, the good outways

the bad but this impacts everyone, no matter your age. Social media is a revolution and we don't know where it's going. The decisions we make today regarding how we use and limit social media will shape future generations.