**SOCIAL NETWORK SITES AND SOCIETY: CURRENT TRENDS AND FUTURE POSSIBILITIES**

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***Abstract***

*The present paper focus on the current trends in social networking sites in the context of Indian society. The origin of social networking sites is not much old. In the current techno-savvy era, social networking sites are gaining popularity day by day. Every individual in society whether young or aged is using the social networking sites for communicating purpose or the other. A social networking service  or  social networking site is we can say like online social media platform through which people can build social connections with others who show same personal or career content, interests, activities, backgrounds at the platform.. In this paper, the features of social networking sites are also highlighted. The current paper focus on the emerging trends in usage of social networking sites in current era. There is much scope of research in this sphere yet. The need for research in this context is also highlighted.*

Keywords: Social Networking sites, Current trends, New possibilities

**Introduction**

In the current era of globalization and modernization, the popularity of social networking sites have been increasing day by day.A social networking service  or  social networking site is we can say like online social media platform through which people can build social connections with others who show same personal or career content, interests, activities, backgrounds at the platform. In the current time, the availability of social networking services may vary in format and also they provide variant number of features. Using [desktops](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Desktop_computer) and  [laptops](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laptop), mobile devices such as [tablet computers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tablet_computer) and [smartphones](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smartphone), they can incorporate a range of new information and communication tools.

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This results in a unique feature like digital photo/video/sharing and diary entries online. Social networking sites provide the facility to users to share their thoughts, ideas, digital photos and videos, posts within their social network. The social networking has existed since the earliest development of towns,the web enables people to connect with others who live in different locations across the globe (Obar and Wildman, 2015).

**History**

The origin of social networking is not much old. Throwback to nineties, social networking began in the form of generalized online communities such as [Theglobe.com](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theglobe.com) (1995), [Geocities](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geocities) (1994) and [Tripod.com](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tripod.com) (1995) with the objective to bringing people together to interact with their friends and strangers through chat rooms and also enable them to share personal information and ideas via personal web pages by providing easy-to-use publishing tools and free or inexpensive web space. However some sites like [Classmates.com](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classmates.com)  adopted a different approach by providing e-mail address to people to share information with each other. The new time of social networking sites began to gain popularity with the emergence of [Six Degrees](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SixDegrees.com) in 1997, [Open Diary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_Diary) in 1998, [Mixi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mixi) in 1999, [Makeoutclub](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Makeoutclub) in 2000, [Cyworld](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyworld) in 2001, [Hub Culture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hub_Culture) in 2002, and [Friendster](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friendster) and [Nexopia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nexopia) in 2003.  [MySpace](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MySpace) and [LinkedIn](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LinkedIn) were launched in 2003, and [Bebo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bebo) was launched in 2005. [Orkut](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orkut) became the first popular social networking service in Brazil and quickly gain popularity in India (Madhavan, 2007). In 2005, there was a tremendous rise in social networking sites' growth, At this time, MySpace had more [page views](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pageview) than [Google](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Google). [Facebook](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Facebook) launched in 2004 and became the largest social networking site in the world in 2009 has displaced many services. (Hafner,2001).

**General Features of Social Networking Sites**

There are many social web sites, and the sites differ in detail and layouts of the features they provide to people. From time to time, these sites make changes in the existing features and add new features. Following are the general features of networking sites :

* **Personal Profile**

Many sites have members that can create their personal profiles i.e. homepages. The sites also provide the privacy features that who can see their posts, with whom they can share their information. Social networking sites are making personal profiles more elaborate.

* **Communicating with online connections**

Each social network site provides this friendly feature to pass message to others. The members of the same social network (also different ones) can send messages to each other using this facility and be informed by notification emails. Social websites provide facilities to members to communicate with their friends and online connections.

* **Thinking rooms**

The members of various social websites can leave comments on the UCCs. They also provide facility to give feedback. The voting procedure on these sites may take the form of ranking (e.g. checking 3 stars out of 5 stars), or marking the UCC as a ‘‘favorite,’’ or flagging it as spam or inappropriate.

* **Friendship Network**

As the facility provided by many Social Web sites, the members to use to communicate with their friends and other members. This can be done through email, instant messaging, text messaging, and public and private bulletin boards, and even internet phone services.

* **Forums**

Many social Web sites use to create default groups and assign new members to one or more of them. The members can also form new groups, and/or join them. Members and non-members can both view all the UCCs in all the groups. However, only members may post UCCs.

* **Upload Content**

The Social Networking Sites allow members to upload text messages, photographs, audio and video files free of cost. The last post will come first and so on. Further, all content is published in real time, and becomes visible instantly.

* **Discovering Information About Others**

The social networking sites allow the people to discover new information about others. Today’s mobile communication enable the people to explore new information about others and about new topics.

**Emerging Trends in Social Networking Sites**

In the current period of modernization and in era of technology, popularity of social networking consistently rises. Today's technologically savvy population want immediate and healthy solutions to their problems. While talking about emerging trends in social networking sites the concept of "[real-time web](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Real-time_web)" and "[location-based](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Location-based_service)" are at the forefront. Real-time means the users can contribute contents, which is then broadcast as it is being uploaded.

Social networking is a platform based on internet where users interact with each other for different purposes (Kenton, 2019). Through social media sites, people can establish contact with their family, friends, customers or clients. These sites work for both social and business purposes. Nowadays, as we see social media becoming as essential part of their everyday life, so people cannot imagine their life without it. Even when people stay at thousands of miles apart, they can feel connected through these sites. The lifestyle of the 21st century has been totally changed with the development of social sites. The social networking sites emerged in the early 20th century. The first social media site was developed in 1997 known as Six Degrees. Later, in 2002 Friendster was introduced which allowed its users to make profile, upload photos, and interact with each other. (Terrel, 2019). In the present scenario the popularity of these sites is increasing day by day. Here are listed the latest trends in working of these social sites.

**Increase demand for influencers**

Influencer marketing is emerging as a hub of advertising products which is also cost effective in today’s era and can reach a larger group of people in a few amounts of time. Whether an organization is big or small, it is establishing links with influencers of social media for promoting their products or services. (Garcia, 2019).

### Live video is thriving

Live video content is another popular trend that is emerging now days. People use to share their special moments like birthday celebrations, weddings etc. on social media through live video which can be seen by their near and dears. The business organizations use live events of launching a new products or service which can be seen by many people at a same time. Live videos are most popular in Facebook and Instagram. Video apps like Tiktok is also very popular among the younger generation (Patel, 2018).

### Businesses organizations depend on social sites for advertising

Now a days, almost all business organizations use paid means to advertise their products. In the area of business even small self-made entrepreneur use to advertise about their product or service with the help of social networking sites. These ads helps small business to advertise their products as this process is highly cost effective and less time consumed.

**Education**

Social networking sites are gaining much popularity in the sphere of education as well. They have introduced many new ways through which the learners are engaged with technology. The educational use of social networking sites is deeply viewed by Albayrak and Yildirim (2015) Students are using Facebook as a Course Management System (CMS) . The findings of their study support that Facebook tremendously increased student involvement in discussions and out-of-class communication among instructors and students.

**Employment**

The college students using the social network services to for internship and job opportunities. Many schools have implemented online alumni directories which serve as makeshift social networks that current and former students can turn to for career advice. LinkedIn is also another great resource. It helps alumni, students and unemployed individuals look for work.

**Need for New Research**

Our social lives are greatly influenced by social network sites both on an interpersonal and a community level. The young people who are the heaviest users of these sites, it is clearly visible the changes in their interaction patterns and social connections. The positive potential of social network sites is great. The form and maintenance of our relationships with others, are also changing with these social network sites. As they evolve and spread, we expect network effects to occur and their social utility to increase. However in current era of technology, the use of social networking sites should be vast. There is still scope for new research in this context. The need of research for finding new possibilities can be highlighted from following points:

* To leverage the power of social networking sites in formal organizations, the research suggest that users welcome learning more about their colleagues’ lives, and that this information is used to facilitate social interactions that directly and indirectly support job-related tasks.
* To support social networking sites individually as they start life transition or they move from one city to another. These sites can help students maintain past connections and initiate new relationships during their transition to college. Research is needed to discover what kinds of features best support these needs.
* To increase community and political engagement, especially among traditionally disenfranchised groups. Research is needed to highlight the need to better understand how they must adapt in order to support diverse populations and goals.
* As social network sites are adopted by broader segments of society, research is needed to conquer the change in practices, risks, and benefits. (Ellison, Lampe and Steinfield, 2009)

**Conclusion**

At the end, we can conclude that social networking sites are emerging as a boon for our society. Though every coin has two sides, and these sites have also various negative effects on our society but uses of these sites is increasing day by day. These are getting popular among every section of society. Many sites are developing every day but still in the current techno-savvy era, much research is yet needed to make these sites more friendly and usable.

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