
Good VS Bad of Social Media Sharing: *How Far are We Willing to Expose Ourselves*

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Abstract

This paper intends to highlight the good and bad of social media sharing applications and websites. In the current age of technology advancement, these social media sharing sites are blooming like mushrooms, especially when newcomers to the social media world are trying to repeat the success story of Facebook, Friendster, MySpace, YouTube and Twitter. The problem with these social media is questionable security of privacy. Though many success stories have been achieved with the help of social media sharing; embarrassment and downfall are no exemptions. This paper features the current big players of the social media sharing world, how they are connected, the current users, and the media type they are sharing. This paper will also discuss on how private and how public the information shared on the social media sharing are. With the aim of protecting privacy this paper will also highlight suggestion in making connections success story and downfall of too much exposure on social media sharing world. By publishing this paper it is hoped that awareness of social media sharing pros and cons can be spread.

Keywords

Social Media Sharing, Privacy, Advantages, Disadvantages

Received: April 7, 2015 / Accepted: June 25, 2015 / Published online: July 17, 2015

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1. Introduction

Social Media Sharing is a medium that allow its users to share information with whomever they like. These information came in forms of magazine, internet forums, web blogs, social networks, podcast, images, audio and even personal information [1]. Nowadays the social media networks are the places where many people are trying to increase their reputation by showing they are in trend. These individuals share media on the network such as celebrity news, pictures, hash tagging ideas or quotes, videos of themselves covering a song, publicity stunts, political ideas and much more to get the attention they seek. Many of the social media sites and application connects to one another to increase the speed of sharing just by posting on one site or application. Listed below are some of the most popular social media sharing sites in the world and their description:

A. YouTube

YouTube is a social media sharing site, created by three former PayPal employees in February 2005, which was later on taken over by Google in 2006 [2]. YouTube allows its user to upload, view and share videos on the website. These feature later on was able to be embed in Facebook, blogs, MySpace, Google +, reddit, tumblr, hi5, LinkedIn and many other social media sharing network. Most of the video on YouTube are uploaded by individuals, but there are also media corporations that pay for their advertising materials to be played on YouTube. Users are also able to subscribe and make their own playlist.

B. Facebook

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Facebook is a social network website that allows its registered user to make connection by adding friends on the network. People can be searched by using email, name, directly by URL or even filtering search conditions Facebook also allows third party application to be attached to their website such as games and other social medias. Facebook allow their user to chat, share pictures, videos, audios, share personal information and memos.

C. Twitter

Twitter is a combination of social network site and microblogging. Twitter allows its user to type in an estimation of 140 characters and post it on their profile; this small string of words are referred to as tweets. Registered user can choose whom they want to follow on the site, and they can allow people to follow them or choose whom not to be able to follow them. There are also third party sites and applications that allow user whom would like to extend their 'tweets' to more than 140 characters [3].

D. Instagram

Instagram is a social media sharing site that concentrates on videos and pictures. Each registered user will have their own profile where they can post videos and pictures and share them to other social media sites. Instagram also allow the users to filter use photographic editing tools on the picture they took to enhance the features. A new feature of Instagram is Instagram direct which allow user to choose whom they want to share the picture with [4].

E. Foursquare

Foursquare is a location based social networking website which allow user to expose their current location and with addition to add pictures as attachment. With foursquare user are allowed to collect points as a race to become 'Mayor' of a location. Users are able to add friends and sync it with other social media friends. Users are also able to know what social media sharing site the other user possess [5].

F. LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a social networking site targeted for professional occupation. Users are able to submit share their resume, make connections and promote themselves to obtain the job they are interested in. Users are also allowed to endorse another user in terms of comments and skills [6]. Users can also use the follow feature on companies to get latest newsfeed from them.

G. Blog

Blogging has been a way of some individuals to express their selves and share information. Some of the most popular blog sites are Blogspot, Wordpress, Xanga and Weebly. Users can post pictures, video and audios on their blog site and have the

option to allow these postings to be shared over other social media sites.

H. WeChat

WeChat is an application for smartphones and tablets users. WeChat users are able to create a profile over the internet and add contacts that are in their device contact list. We chat also have the feature called 'Shake' that allows user who is shaking their device to find a contact that is shaking the device as the same time; another feature to allow finding people is the function people nearby, which based on the current location of the user WeChat will suggest people to be added to the friend list. We chat also allow their user to post picture to share to all their contacts in a feature called 'moments'. Other than that WeChat is first and foremost an instant messaging application that allows media sharing between their users.

Based on the social media mentioned earlier it is clear that most of the social media sites allow media sharing such as pictures, videos, audios and information between its users and most of the social media are centralized allowing faster information sharing.

Who are the users of these social media site? Basically social media sharing sites are trying to get as many viewers as they can regardless of age, though the minimum age for registered user in a social media sharing sites is 13 years of age [7]; though some companies do try to make their product usable for underage kid by turning on the family safety features.[8-9].

In March 2013, Facebook quarterly report shows that there are currently 1.11 billion monthly active users which is an increase of 23% year over year [10]. Although this is a good sign for communication, the number is quite worrying as according to an article written by Emil Protalinski in 2011, an estimated number of 7.5 million of the current user at that time are below the minimum requirement age, and 5 million from that number are children aged of 10 and below. Facebook usage requires registration to utilize all features inside the social media sharing site. Some social media does not even need registration for people other than user to take a peek into their content. It is already a concern us as adult having our information, videos, pictures and locations circulating around the net; it is an even bigger concern for children as they are still immature. This is worrying as children nowadays are smart enough to use the internet by themselves, with the internet world is open to the circulation of explicit contents and materials, political squabbles, pornographic and worst of all cyber bullying, what will happened to their mental and emotions if the unfiltered materials were found by them?

2. Benefits of Social Media Sharing

Since the debut of social media, information spreading has become faster and cheaper. Users of social media are able to communicate through the internet even when the other party is offline; besides making new connections, the action of sharing pictures, videos, ideas and personal information has become much easier.

There are bodies such as societies, associations and companies that creates a 'like' page that instead of making a website to expose their company and product. This is a very good idea as they can have close interaction with their users, monitors their users and observe what are the current likes and dislikes; this is a good way for them to improve their products and service [11].

In terms of teenagers and students, according to a paper published by the American Academy of Pediatrics, social media has positive effects in children and adolescent socialization and communication by:

- 1 Opportunities for community engagement through raising money for charity and volunteering for local events, including political and philanthropic events;
- 2 Enhancement of individual and collective creativity through development and sharing of artistic and musical endeavors;
- 3 Growth of ideas from the creation of blogs, podcasts, videos, and gaming sites.
- 4 Expansion of one's online connections through shared interests to include others from more diverse backgrounds (such communication is an important step for all adolescents and affords the opportunity for respect, tolerance, and increased discourse about personal and global issues); and
- 5 Fostering of one's individual identity and unique social skills. [12-13]

These points proves that social media share does have its usefulness in building a knowledgeable community in terms of information sharing.

3. Dangers of Making Connections

Making connections are what social media networks are all about; On social media, user can find out about other users by viewing profiles, checking out mutual friends and the media that other users share. In other words 24 hours a day the profile of a social media network registered user has an audience; the audience could be friends acquaintances,

family members, colleague, bosses, relational partners and many more who can access to displayed information [14]. The unknown audiences of social media the reason why users should be really careful in making connections on social media network.

First impressions are important in the real world, it is also the same on social media network sites; how one present themselves on their profile and activities shows how they would like to be approached [15]. For an example if a girl is posting explicit photos on social media sharing network of herself having fun in night clubs, or posing in a swimsuit, or maybe lying half-naked on the bed, it is not surprising why she has many male friends, or people posting explicit words on her comment page. Objects such as profile photos, mobile uploads and cover photos is how users judge other user on social media; because of that careful self-representation on social media network is very important to ensure unwanted incidents are not to occur.

Reputations on the social media networks are one of the consideration people choose in making connections, for example a person who is really popular in certain geographical area due to an occurrence, reality television shows for an example will receive more attentions as people are attracted to name droppings [16]. Users such as an important figure which may have large influence in decision making or a state leader for example, will have higher probability of getting 'added' (connected).

Making connections on social media are good in many ways as it could social media users assist in building their social connections, but moderation is advised as users might not know people whom they are dealing with in the social networking networks. When establishing connection on social media some users might say whom they are pretending to be, but in many case there are many impostor falsifying their information on the social media networks. Scams happens a lot in social media, as mentioned earlier there a lot of fake profiles and these impostors uses other people photos and information in for their benefits [17].

A type of scam that is popular on social media is the romance scams. This type of scam has tricked many people worldwide; the cases of romance scam are quite popular on social media. Romance scam starts when someone pretends to be a widow or someone who has a large fortune supposedly inherited by them, but due to some problems they need someone to help them execute the transferring of the possession. These predators will then ask for a sum of money while promising the victims that the returns will be much more and will be shared between them. This is not the case when most of the time the victim will lose whatever they have given to the predator [18].

There is always risk in teenagers using social media. Youths

nowadays are always trying to prove themselves to their peers by posing that they are better than their peer for achieving what other are still lacking [19]. Though some cases might turn inspiring, others might take this the negative ways, 'keyboard-warriors' and cyber bullies alike are always ready to pounce with negative feedback; sometimes this cases does not stop on the net as some hotheaded youth usually take matters into their own hands which could end with chaos, a gang war for example [13].

4. Targets & Attacker

When people are using social media sharing network, they are the entertainers which attract audiences to view them. The viewers might be employers, family members, peers some might even be enemies waiting to pounce on any mistake done. In this case it is very important to consider at every condition to post or not to post. [15, 20-21]

In real life when we are sharing our photos in physical it is meant only for selected eyes; it is a different case where on social media users have to set the privacy so that only the targeted people will be able to see the photos, though there are some people who want their photos to be viewed by everyone [20]. Some users are not well verse with the settings, this makes their privacy vulnerable to unwanted eyes [20]. It is the same issues for personal information, videos and audios.

Another contributor to the privacy issues are the ever changing infrastructure of the social media network which makes it hard for user to configure the settings. There are users who are technology-savvy, it is not much of a hassle for them to understand the settings as exploring is part of what information technology; this is a different case with computer illiterate people, or kids who only started to learn about computers, they might not have much knowledge about the value of privacy over social media.

Predators on social media networks are very good at hiding themselves amongst normal users, so it is quite hard to differentiate between legitimate and fake users. These attackers will observe victims that are reluctant over the security of their profile collecting information such as personal details listed on social media networks such as current locations, relationships, occupation, interest, daily activities such as location of activities, acquaintance during activities, preference in activities and even interactions on social media network [22].

5. Pride and Ego

Some Users of social media sharing often use the social

media network to show off their abilities. These types of users are usually teenagers and young adults vying for attentions. Some of their activities include posting explicit photos of them partying and enjoying time drinking alcohols, creating pornography, vandalism and breaking the law for the sake of fame and ego. Little did these users know these videos, picture and text postings can be used as proofs against them in the court of law. Nicknames and Public IPs can be used as cover, but with the latest tracing technology, authority are able track them.

This issues will be trouble for them as some employers uses social media to observe their employees' social media network profiles, carefully learning their employees behavior; which by posting some sensitive issues, posting explicit photos and videos or breaking the law would tarnish their professional reputation. In other case, when these type of user is a job applicant; employers brands social media network users based on their activities on the net, which could be a determining point in hiring an employee [23].

Other issues in regard to this touches the aspect of religion, many post on the social media sharing are attacking or against religions teaching. Imagine if a Muslim girl posting on the social media sharing, drinking alcohol or showing nude images of her on the net; first she's disobeying the teaching of the religion, second she's shaming her family with that act. So it a decision is to be made here, when you gain something, you will lose something, but which is priority, your pride or your ego?

6. Fame and Downfall

Social media network has been the stage of fame and downfall for their users. Users has to take responsibility of all their postings, everyday there will be people fighting over a post condemning others while defending their ideas. These scene can be seen everywhere on the social media networks; but these dramas are also the reason that created success stories of social media networks, though it may sound too good to be true, exposure on the social media network are also a downfall of many individual due too much overexposure.

A. Success Stories of Social Media User

YouTube has always been the stage for up and coming entertainers, some of them are singers, and some of them are short story producers, actors and even composers. Some notable names on YouTube are Ryan Higa, WongFu Productions, Kevin Wu and Moymoy Palaboy.

Ryan Higa also known as Nigahiga is a singer comedian, actor and video clip producer. Ryan first videos in 2006 are

mostly lip syncing type of videos; towards 2008 Ryan Higa working together with Sean Fujiyoshi made videos such as “How to be Ninja”, “How to be Emo” and “How to be Gangster” which has attracted many viewers with positive comments. Ryan Higa is also known for his work with Kevin Wu and Chester see for music videos like “Bromance”, “Nice Guys Finish Last” and a parody of Far East Movement song Rocketeer, “Shed a Tear”. In 2010, Ryan Higa ranks 6th in most subscriber of a channel with 1.4million youtube users subscribes to channel NigaHiga. [24]

WongFu Productions is a group of film makers which feature the lineup of Ted Fu, Philip Wang and Wesley Chan. The trio owns a media company called Sketchbook Media which came along after producing countless music video, short stories and vblogs. Many of the videos produced by WongFu productions are with collaboration of YouTube celebrities like Ryan Higa, Kevin Wu, Kina Grannis, Cathy Nguyen and many more. Some of the Work Produced are “Hitting on Cathy”, “WongFu Weekends”, “Strangers, again” and “Just a nice guy”.

B. Downfall Story of Social Media User

Where there's recognition, there'll always be a embarrassment or tragedy. There are many attention getter tend to use the Social Media Network too openly exposing personal information, explicit photos, videos and posting that would anger many parties. There are also sex maniacs, cyberbullies, ‘keyboard warriors’ and psychopath on the social media using this as an opportunity to execute their plans.

In Malaysia there is a girl posting a video on YouTube expressing her feeling being too excited after getting in a relationship for a week. The video was directed to her boyfriend. In the video she was making faces, singing and making sweet promises. Upon posting the video on YouTube, she receives attack from many users especially when people discovered she is still in high school. Some users even accused her making that video as a cheap publicity stunts as her previous videos did not gain much exposure to the public.

This story was received a lot of attention in Malaysia, some users who viewed this video reposted it on Facebook and entertainment blogs, attracting attention and more anger. Embarrassed by her action, the girl decided to pull the video from public view, as the attacking feedbacks are increasing. Although the original has been pulled out from YouTube, other users are still attacking her on the web as several repost of the original video from other user has been circulated on the web. Several parody and attacking videos were made to mock this girl bad judgment was posted on several social media.

Besides embarrassment cases like rape and abuse are always

shadowing social media network users, especially for women. These type of cases are common because teenagers tend to trust strangers that they meet on the net, especially the one who seems ‘cool’ to them.

A 15 year old girl in the United Kingdom was raped by a man she met on the internet. The teenager, from Hindley, Greater Manchester, had begun a "text relationship" with the man after she met him through an internet-based chat service. When the pair met at Wigan Station, the man walked her through the town centre to a nearby park and subjected her to a "horrendous" attack. After raping her in broad daylight, he followed her as she walked to get a bus home before disappearing, based on a report by a policewoman. [25] There are so many cases of girls being stalked, raped and killed over the internet due to too much exposure in social media network; and it is worrying as many of these cases involve underage girls [26-27].

7. Privacy for User

Protection of Privacy in social media network is very weak changes made towards the security new features will complicate the usability of social media even more. This is due to users who are still not familiar with the new features will leave their security setting as default, meaning leaving themselves vulnerable. This is proven by a research on digital inequality, which highlighted that people systematically differ in their online behavior based on their digital media experiences and skills [20, 28-29]. Digital inequality is created by digital divide, the more a user is expose to something the more experience the user gain in using it. Based on the research, keep changing the settings and graphical user interface regularly are not that useful to users whom are not using regularly, as users’ past consumption behaviors online also may impact their future behaviors and the types of sites and services they adopt [20, 30].

Settings features such as ‘hide page’ from public, ‘unsearchable by email’, block users, does exist on social media, but on Facebook for example, whenever another user owns URL to another user’s page, The page will still be searchable, though will be limited based on settings set by the other user. In YouTube security measures has increased, as user are now able to hide certain videos from certain user or from public views. YouTube belongs to Google and the usage of Google now are too centralized that once a user logged in to Gmail or Google, that particular user is practically logged in to all his account for Google subsidiaries. Google even collects the data of footprint of their users, for example the videos being watched on YouTube by a person will be are recorded as an activity, and this activity log can be viewed by other users that are

connected to the person's circle. This might be good for a trend setter, but people will know what the users are watching, and it is an intrusion of privacy in many ways. The same process happens for Android downloads on Google 'Play Store', where whichever applications or services has an association of with the user will still be there until it is deleted by the user themselves. Which many users do not know of this fact and end up with their information being exposed to the world.

Another big reason to worry is user do not know where their medias are stored, a similar issue faced by cloud computing users. By having the data stored in an unknown location, the law of the jurisdiction is also unknown and according to law the devices within a country jurisdiction has to comply if the country wants to know what is inside the company storage. An example for this case was highlighted by a paper written in 2012 by Nir Kshetri based on Google's report released in April 2010. The paper wrote about companies describing how government authorities around the world requested for private information and to censor its applications [30]. In security even if it is the authority requesting for private information, the information are still in danger as the one working in the government are humans; and human desires are susceptible to misuse these private information.

8. Conclusion

Having social connections from all over the world are wonderful as ideas, image, videos, personal information and relationships information can be shared with other people; being able to share these information helps to tighten the bonds between friends and family from afar. The whole concept of information sharing looks good, but everything in this world has boundaries and limitation, and it all depends on how people utilize it.

Social media network as is a medium for people to create connections and communicate with one another. With the existence of social media users are able to express themselves and open up opportunities, as social media network has the ability to make news travel faster. Some users were able to utilize social media network for success and fame, but there are also many users that has become the victims due to over exposure to the social media world.

The question now is how far are user are willing to expose themselves? They can do it as much as they want, but it all depends on how they are doing it and who they are targeting it to. User needs to understand the boundaries of culture and sensitivity, instead of blindly uploading media contents just to get attention. Maybe some idea might reach out to people and create success, but what will happened when the result is

contrary to what is expected?

Making connections are important in the social media networking world, but as Sun Tzu has quoted "*keep your friends close but your enemies closer.*" [31]. This phrase, which has been adopted by strategists from Niccolo Machiavelli to Michael Corleone, reflects the adaptive value of attending very closely to one's enemies. In the same way, our participants appeared to be doing something quite similar—they reported that their "enemies" were closer, but only when they posed a potential threat [31]. It is a useful advice for social media network users, as one will never know, from which angle our enemies will be coming from.

A suggestion to users who are still new to social media network is, not to get excited over the new technologies; lack of knowledge on new technology could prove to be treacherous as it might cause more harm than benefits. New user should try to understand the privacy setup and interface of the application and services before using it. Users should learn who are in their circles, so that they know the boundaries of their targeted audiences. User should also research on privacy settings of the social media they are using works, and how to ensure confidentiality in communication. By understanding one's audience user will be able to be more sensitive towards other people in their circles and avoid hurting other users' feelings [15].

Exposure on social media network are beneficial to all depending on the individuals; how they intend to use it and for what they are using it. There is always a way to create a bulletproof system, but it is almost impossible to create a foolproof system; this is because no matter how careful one is in using a system, a simple carelessness end up with a tragedy. In the end, it all depends on individual personal values and ethics.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to thank Affandi Hussain, Nithi Surachman, Ali Abdulwahid, Majid Nateghizad of the Faculty of Computing, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, for their thoughtful comments throughout various stages of this research.

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