

Benefits and Risks of Social Media

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WHAT'S COVERED

Recall that the Internet is a global network of computers linked by the Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol (TCP/IP). This provides computer users with the ability to share information in ways only imagined in years past. As the Internet has evolved, virtual communities or networks have emerged as the standard by which computer users communicate and share information. In this tutorial, we discuss social media and its benefits and risks.

1. Social Networking

2. Social Networking: Pros and Cons

1. Social Networking

A very popular component of the Internet today is the social network. A **social network** is a website that connects its users by allowing them to communicate with each other, share pictures, share information, and share ideas. Social networks also make it easy for people to form groups of friends based on common interest. **Social media** is the term used to describe the sharing of media (photos, videos, audio, text messages) via a social network. Many people feel that social networking sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, have changed the way people use the Internet. Listed below are some of the most popular social networking websites.

Website	Number of Users Per Month	Description
Facebook	2.9 Billion as of January 2024	Most popular social network on the Internet. Allows users to set up a profile that can be used as a custom web page, where users can share photos, videos, audio, text, web links, etc. Users can choose who has access to the content shared by specifying “friends.”
X (Formerly known as Twitter)	368 Million as of January 2024	Allows users to set up a profile that can be used as a custom web page. Users can share short messages per post with the ability to embed or link

		photos, videos, and audio. Users can choose who has access to shared content by specifying “followers.”
Instagram	2 Billion as of January 2024	Mobile photo sharing application. Users can share photo and video with others. Users can choose who has access to shared content by specifying “followers.”
LinkedIn	310 Million as of December 2023	Professional social network allowing users to connect with past, current, or prospective employers, employees, or colleagues. Provides services for job search and resume posting. Users can make a profile to share employment history and related information. Users can choose who has access to posted content by making “connections” with other users.
Pinterest	498 Million as of December 2023	Idea-sharing website where users can share images or videos to their “boards” and browse content shared by other users.
YouTube	Over 2.49 Billion users monthly as of February 2024	Most popular video sharing network where users can upload video, create channels, and video blog.
WhatsApp	Over 2 Billion as of January 2024	Messaging application that gives users the ability to communicate and share via text or voice instantly.
QQ	554,000,000 as of December 2023	<p>Instant messaging (chat-based) social media platform. It became international (with more than 80 countries using it), after it was launched in China.</p> <p>It can be used to stay in touch with friends through texts, video calls, and voice chats. It even has a built-in translator to translate your chats.</p>
WeChat	1.3 Billion as of December 2023	All-in-one communications app for messaging and calling (similar to WhatsApp) that enables you to connect with the people of your choice. It was also developed by Tencent in China and can easily work alongside QQ.
Qzone	640,000,000 as of December 2023	Similar to QQ and WeChat, Qzone is another social networking service developed by Tencent. It enables you to share photos, watch videos, listen to songs, write blogs, maintain diaries, and so on. It also empowers you to choose the accessories and customize the look and feel of your Qzone web pages.
Tumblr	135,000,000 as of December 2023	Tumblr serves as a social media and microblogging platform that can be used to find and follow things that you like. You can also use it to post anything, including multimedia, to a short-form blog.



TERMS TO KNOW

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2. Social Networking: Pros and Cons

There is no doubt that social networks have had a huge impact on how people use the Internet. For many individuals, social networks are a major part of their lives. Businesses and organizations are realizing the potential of social networks as they seek to develop more personal relationships with customers and clients. While there are many benefits to social networking, recall that there are also risks associated with social networking as well. Listed below are some of the pros and cons of social networks.

Pros	Cons
Social networking sites encourage greater collaboration amongst users	The potential for cyber bullying is increased as users collaborate with one another
Social networking sites build communities around special interest	Social networks can increase the risk of computer addiction as users engage more with friends Social networks can increase the amount of time wasted engaging in social media as opposed to being productive
Social networks increase community access to information	Social networks increase the potential for personal information to be compromised or stolen
Social networks enable people with common interest to meet	Social media can cause relationship problems
Social networks provide fast sharing of information	Social media sometimes provides false information
Social networks are a great way to market or promote a product	Social media can be used for cyberbullying Social media can be used to discriminate against other people
Social networks can aid law enforcement agencies in catching criminals	Social media can compromise personal privacy



As you watch the short video below, think about how you could use social media to advance your own career.



SUMMARY

As the Internet evolves, **social networks** will play an important role in how people use it. Knowing what social networks are available, and the general **pros and cons of social networking**, will enhance the experience of users. In this tutorial, we took a look at what a social network is, as well as pros and cons of social networks in general.



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