History of Social Media: A Review of Literature

Student Name

University

Course

Professor Name

Date

History of Social Media: A Review of Literature

Social media is a significant phenomenon in the 21st century because is a part of many people's daily lives. The term is used to describe various networking instruments and technologies that use the Internet as a tool for communication, collaboration, and creative expression (van Dijck, 2013). The terms "social software" and "Web 2.0" are often used as synonyms to social media, although "Web 2.0" is better defined as the overall trend towards the creation of online communities through new technological features (Ellison & Boyd, 2013, p. 11). Social media, in turn, is defined by Goff (2013) as a set of technologies and tools used to enable the formation of online communities with the goal or productive collaboration and communication. Hence, social media builds on the technological foundations of Web 2.0 to allow users to connect, as well as to produce and exchange user-generated content.

Social media websites all pursue the same goal of enabling users to connect with one another and create opportunities for social interaction using accessible technological tools for communication. For example, many websites today offer instant messaging or video call services (van Dijck, 2013). Soon after its rise, social media became a multi-billion-dollar industry, and now, there are many large platforms that constitute a highly competitive environment (Gebicka & Heinemann, 2014). The growing competition in this sector has created the need for social media networks to offer innovative features. As a result, while the goal of social media sites is the same, and many of them have similar basic features, such as instant messaging, there are also many added features that distinguish one platform from the others. For instance, Instagram allows people to gain influence through blogging; Facebook enables participating in groups, while What's App offers free call and text features.

The range of the features provided by different social media platforms means that most people are active on two or more social media sites. According to Primack et al. (2017), the use of multiple social media platforms is particularly prevalent among young adults, with the majority of this group using between 2 and 6 platforms daily. In order to understand the significant and still growing popularity of social media, it is essential to reflect on its historical development.

Historically, the development of social media can be traced back to the 1970s. While some people also consider e-mail technologies to be a part of social media, the first Internet discussion system was Usenet, which appeared in 1979 (Sajithra & Patil, 2013). Usenet enabled users to create discussion boards by sending categorized messages to many users at once and allowing them to leave comments and post responses (Sajithra & Patil, 2013). Another major development occurred in 1988 when the Internet Relay Chat (IRC) was created. The primary function of IRC was to enable users to chat with one another in real time, both in groups and in private messages (Sajithra & Patil, 2013). The introduction of Usenet and IRC led to the creation of hundreds of personal websites and online discussion groups, which were similar to modern-day social media in their purpose and functionality.

The first website that was classified as a social media platform was SixDegrees.com (McIntyre, 2014). This website enabled users to connect with new people from all over the globe, and employed features such as personal profiles and instant messaging (McIntyre, 2014). Despite its promising concept, the website shut down after less than three years in operation. Over the next few years, more and more social media websites began to appear, including Asian Avenue and Xanga (McIntyre, 2014). LiveJournal and MySpace soon became the leading social media platforms, which led to the popularization of blogging (Sajithra & Patil, 2013).

New developments in the area of social media also involved an increased focus on professional collaboration. LinkedIn, Xing, and Ryze were all launched in the early 2000s as professional networking platforms (Razmerita et al., 2014). The increasing variability and scope of social media sites led social software analysts to coin the term "Yet Another Social Networking Service," or YASNS (Gebicka & Heinemann, 2014, p. 152). As the focus of social media was on the diverse adult demographic, unique features offered by different social media platforms became their competitive advantage, attracting new users and preventing the existing ones from switching to a different platform.

One of the social media sites that were able to sustain competition and grow substantially over the years is Facebook. This platform was launched in 2004 as a tool for connecting Harvard University graduates and later expanded to other schools, too (Goff, 2013). According to Goff (2013), Facebook allowed high school students to register in 2005 and then opened to all members of the public over the age of 13 in 2006. Facebook provides all of the features associated with social media, including personal profiles, groups, posts, comments, and photo and video sharing. This enabled the platform to grow in popularity over the years, from 12 million users in 2006 to over 1.7 billion users in 2016 (Goff, 2013). As of today, Facebook remains the most popular social media platform all over the globe.

References

Ellison, N. B., & Boyd, D. M. (2013). Sociality through social network sites. In W. H. Dutton (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of internet studies* (pp. 151–172). Oxford University Press.

Gebicka, A., & Heinemann, A. (2014). Social media & competition law. *World Competition, 37*(2), 149-172.

Goff, D. H. (2013). A history of social media industries. In A. B. Albarran (Ed.), *The social media industries* (pp. 16-45). Routledge.

McIntyre, K. E. (2014). The evolution of social media from 1969 to 2013: A change in competition and a trend toward complementary, niche sites. *The Journal of Social Media in Society, 3*(2), 5-25.

Primack, B. A., Shensa, A., Escobar-Viera, C. G., Barrett, E. L., Sidani, J. E., Colditz, J. B., & James, A. E. (2017). Use of multiple social media platforms and symptoms of depression and anxiety: A nationally-representative study among US young adults. *Computers in Human Behavior, 69*, 1-9. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.11.013

Razmerita, L., Kirchner, K., & Nabeth, T. (2014). Social media in organizations: Leveraging personal and collective knowledge processes. *Journal of Organizational Computing and Electronic Commerce, 24*(1), 74-93. https://doi.org/10.1080/10919392.2014.866504

Sajithra, K., & Patil, R. (2013). Social media–history and components. *Journal of Business and Management, 7*(1), 69-74.

van Dijck, J. (2013). *The culture of connectivity: A critical history of social media*. Oxford University Press.