

Social media now refers to web-based applications that promote the creation and exchange of user-generated content. The year 2006 introduced Twitter – a real-time dialogue, news, and opinion posting system called "micro-blogging," that limits messages to short posts. Twitter quickly wielded a powerful influence, connecting social media users in real time worldwide, a popularity somewhat narrowing since Elon Musk changed the site to X in 2023. Digital image sites like Pinterest(R) added a visual dimension to social exchanges in 2010. By 2016, amateur entertainment and personal influencer reels became a hit on TikTok, rivaled by Snapchat(R), , Facebook's Reels, and Instagram. That same year, live-streaming took off on Facebook and Periscope (with the latter ending its activities in 2021). According to Pew Research Center, Facebook and YouTube are the most widely-used platforms as of 2024. But as of March 2024, Slashdot lists 101 social media platforms. These sites lure users and advertisers to participate in a marketplace of social chat, to see and be seen, to buy and sell, and to be heard. If one platform does not last in popularity, another will take its place. Emerging sites cater to niche interests and facilitate family and friend connections. They also offer emotional support and promote boutique products, health aids, charities, business brands, education, political activism, and so much more. Whether – and how – to control of all this activity is an ongoing debate. The U.S. government has recently moved to either limit or ban TikTok(R) in the U.S. due to Chinese ownership interests. Sparking further controversy, the U.S. Supreme Court is considering a case about federal government involvement on social media. Social media usage is widespread and continues to grow with a variety of options. People have exchanged the backyard fence and the kitchen table for a carnival's midway of fluid conversation groups and virtual booths of barker's wares. It is still early days for understanding all the implications of people's online habits and the inevitable changes being wrought by social media sites. Nevertheless, surveys, studies, and experts have ventured some observations and predictions about the effects of these online platforms. The Positive Effects of Social Media Social media wields a powerful influence. Some of the positive effects include: Improving users' mental health Providing an outlet for creativity Offering opportunities for professional networking Creating educational opportunities and social awareness Building new business opportunities and marketing channels Improvements to Mental Health Social media's impact has created many positive effects for society. Mesfin Awoke Bekalu and Rachel F. McCloud concluded in a 2020 Harvard study that routine daily use of social media positively correlated with "three health-related outcomes: social well-being, positive mental health, and self-rated health."While this national study of adult use of social media did not discount the potential negative aspects of addiction to or overuse of social media, Dr. Bekalu reported, "Our findings suggest that the ways in which people are using social media may have more of an impact on their mental health and well-being than just the frequency and duration of their use."The Addiction Center explains that constant interaction with an online platform triggers the "brain's reward area" chemically in the same way as drugs like cocaine, or like "a syringe of dopamine being injected straight into the system."This expansive access to info and social media explains how so many have fallen prey to doxxing." Child Exploitation A dark side of the internet and social media is child exploitation. The global reach and speed of digital communication have enabled child pornographers and predators to flourish behind digital masks and in shadowy groups. The ease of using social media apps and platforms on mobile devices enables

predatory adults to groom children by text and live streaming, share and consume child pornography, and extort children for sex. Minors also make this exploitation easier, intended or not, by "sexting." According to Katie Terrell Hanna of TechTarget, "wiki wiki" means "fast" in Hawaiian, which is how the name originated. Whether through online forums, sharing documents, group chats, or how-to videos, individuals can work together with others to achieve common goals, create meaningful content, and solve problems collectively. Social media has created complex human interaction at several levels that happen simultaneously in a single venue, ranging from the most personal to general entertainment and news events in ways formerly segmented in separate communication channels – telephone, print media, one-way radio/TV shows, and telegraph messages.

Opportunities for Professional Networking

Social media platforms offer opportunities for people to expand their social networks and forge new connections with other individuals around the world that they might not have otherwise encountered. This opportunity for professional development was the idea behind LinkedIn early on. The LinkedIn platform has expanded exponentially in 22 years, a testimony to the value of professional connections for both individuals and businesses in a global marketplace. By broadening their professional circles, people can access diverse perspectives, experiences, and resources, which can enrich their lives and enhance their social capital. In other words, the person is obsessed with social media habits such as scrolling, texting, and posting, will spend time online to the exclusion of other life activities, and may ignore family members and friends. Social media sites provide opportunities for individuals to connect with friends, family, and like-minded individuals, even across geographical distances.