

THE DARK SIDE OF SOCIAL MEDIA: NAVIGATING THE ETHICAL CHALLENGES OF DATA PRIVACY, MISINFORMATION, AND TEENAGE INFLUENCERS

U. Zubareva, V. Stepina

*UZubareva05@gmail.com, vstepina082@gmail.com;
Research supervisor – O. A. Kavalenka, Ph.D., Senior Lecturer*

This article explores the ethical challenges posed by social media, focusing on data privacy, misinformation, and the impact on teenage influencers. It examines the risks of personal information disclosure, vulnerability to cybercrimes, erosion of privacy, and ethical dilemmas surrounding online behavior. Emphasizing responsible social media use, the article highlights the need for collective efforts to build a healthier and more ethical digital world.

Keywords: social media; data privacy; misinformation; teenage influencers; ethical challenges; cybercrimes; privacy concerns; responsible behavior; digital world.

INTRODUCTION

The modern world is characterized by a high rate of change in the economic, political and social spheres, technologies, methods and business models, habits and tastes of the population. The trend towards increasing the level of openness and accessibility of information is becoming global: people on the Internet easily come into contact with each other for ordinary communication, as well as for the purpose of cooperation, shopping, collecting information about competitors, etc. This process is facilitated by the active development of information communication technologies [1].

RESULTS AND ITS DISCUSSION

More than half of the world now uses social media (59 %) 4.76 billion people around the world now use social media, 137 million new users have come online within the last 12 months [2]. It continues to grow as a form of communication and entertainment, meaning social platforms get more powerful as their memberships rise.(fig. 1) Due to this, social media impacts society in the following ways: Generating visibility around social, ethical, environmental and political views or issues.

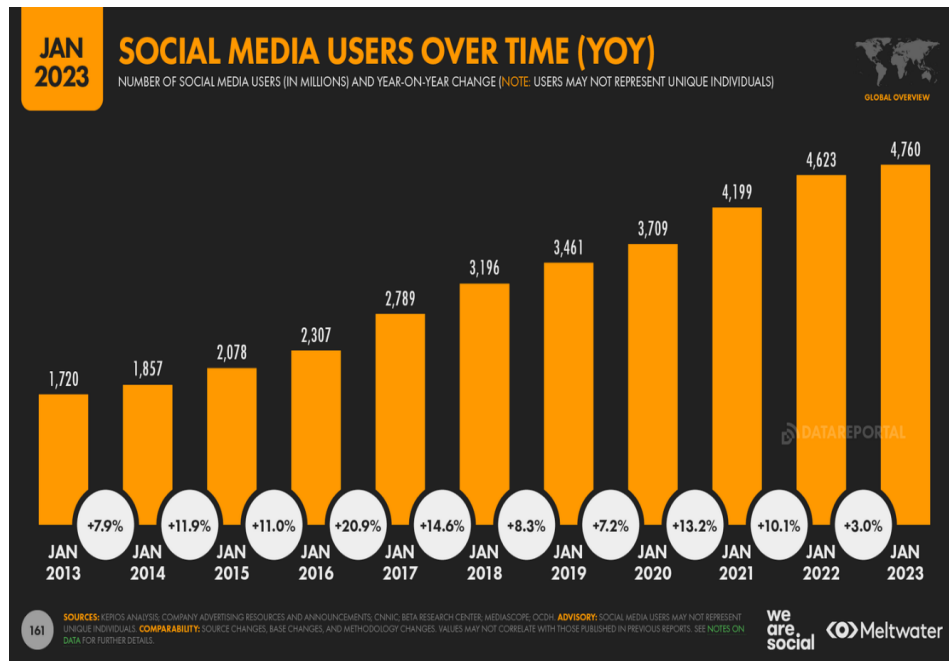


Fig. 1. Number of social media users around the world over time

The evolution of the Internet as a communication medium is a two-way process.

On the one hand, it is determined by the level of technology development, on the other hand, by the development of the social needs of users in their new capacity: not only a consumer, but also a content creator.

Most people who are around others in public often have their eyes glued to their phone screens. This is because, we are very dependent on technology, especially social media. Social media has completely changed the way we communicate with each other, and we can usually accomplish the same things just by talking on the phone. However, there are several negative consequences to relying on social media instead of interacting with people in person. One of these consequences is that social media can be addictive. This can have dangerous physical and mental effects. Another consequence of social media is that it can disconnect people from the real world. People can become so immersed in their social media lives that they stop communicating with other people in real life.

The researchers grouped the negative effects into six themes [3]:

- Addiction to social networks
- Cost of social exchange: includes both psychological harms, such as depression, anxiety or jealousy, and other costs such as wasted time, energy and money
- Annoying content: includes a wide range of content that annoys, upsets or irritates, such as disturbing or violent content or sexual or obscene content

-Privacy concerns: includes any threats to personal privacy related to storing, repurposing or sharing personal information with third parties

-Security threats: refers to harms from fraud or deception such as phishing or social engineering

-Cyberbullying: includes any abuse or harassment by groups or individuals such as abusive messages, lying, stalking or spreading rumours

-Low performance: refers to negative impact on job or academic performance.

Data Privacy, ethical concerns and misinformation

People are using social media more and more, but there are concerns over privacy. It is hard to keep your personal information private on social media because they are designed to share information. People have to let go of some privacy rules in order to use social media, which can make them more vulnerable. There are no clear guarantees of personal privacy online, so people are often tempted to do things that violate someone's privacy.

Kids aged 8 to 11 spend about 13.5 hours a week online, and 18 % of them are actively using social networks. Teens aged 12 to 15 spend about 20.5 hours online, and 69 % of them are using social networks. Although children and teenagers represent the largest groups of Internet users, for the most part they do not know how to protect their personal information online, and are most vulnerable to cybercrimes related to the violation of information privacy [4].

The digital age has changed the way we think about privacy. In today's societies where technology allows for constant monitoring, confidentiality has a new meaning. Technologies such as closed-circuit cameras (CCTV) are common in public places, or in some private spaces, such as at work and home. Personal computers and devices, like smartphones with a global positioning system (GPS), leave our privacy vulnerable. Recently, reports have come out indicating that some of the largest companies, such as Amazon, Microsoft, and Facebook, as well as various government agencies, collect information without the person's consent and store it in databases for future use. It's almost impossible to say that privacy still exists in this digital world.

Today, social networks are becoming a favorite platform for people who commit antisocial behavior. These media offer a lot of data, including things like your date of birth, place of residence, place of work, and other personal information. In some cases, users accidentally share information that can be dangerous and inappropriate. Information about what people do on social networks can have far-reaching consequences for their future. A few examples of situations that can affect and have been affected are employment, obtaining a visa and going to college. Indiscriminate participa-

tion also led to situations such as identity theft and bank fraud. In addition, privacy protection in today's networked society can become a serious problem. The digital revolution has changed our views on privacy, but there should be clear distinctions between what is public and what is private. One school of thought is that the only way to maintain privacy today is not to share information. However, ensuring confidentiality and control over information flows and disclosure in online communities is an ongoing process. This requires the deliberate creation of systems designed to mitigate privacy concerns.

Many young people today spend a lot of time on social networks, checking the activity of their "friends", as well as publishing information about their own actions so that their "friends" are aware of what they are doing (see fig.2). This can have long-term consequences, such as affecting a person's academic performance. For example, a student at a well-known university who published photos of herself having a good time at parties while studying was refused a job because of some of her social media posts. Although the ethical issue here is the question of an employee's right to privacy and whether a person's social media profile should affect their ability to perform their duties, the impact on a person's long-term personal growth is obvious [4].



Fig. 2. Why people share on the Internet

There are a number of problems that can arise from social media posts, which is often the result of a lack of understanding and respect for the ethical and moral points of view of the people involved. We've found that it's typical for people to post on social networking sites without thinking about how it might affect other people, but this can often lead to conflict because there can be a difference of opinion about the consequences of a post. For example, when a head of a British company made an Instagram post with some racist overtones before boarding a plane to South Africa, it caused a stir which led to the immediate dismissal of the head. Although the executive director said that it was a joke and there was no intentional prejudice, this difference in views

on the consequences of the publication led to the fact that the head was out of work, and the company was struggling to maintain its public image [4].

Misinformation

Misinformation is another major issue plaguing social media. With the rise of fake news, troll farms, and other forms of disinformation, it can be difficult to discern what is true and what is false online. This can have serious consequences, from influencing elections to spreading harmful health information [5].

Teenage influencers

Teenage influencers are a growing presence on social media. These young people often have massive followings and are sought after by brands for paid partnerships. However, they also face significant ethical challenges, particularly when it comes to issues of authenticity, transparency, and responsibility.

The emergence of envy in teenagers due to social networks is a growing concern. Teenagers and not only them may become envious of their peers who appear in posts in social networks and who have more exciting lives, more friends, or more success than they do.

This envy can lead to negative consequences such as diminished self-esteem, feelings of inadequacy, and social isolation. In extreme cases, envy can also lead to cyberbullying and other forms of aggressive behavior.

It is important for parents and educators to help teenagers recognize and manage feelings of envy. This can be done by encouraging gratitude and empathy, promoting positive self-talk and mindfulness, and limiting exposure to social media platforms that exacerbate feelings of envy [6].

Overall, understanding and managing envy in adolescents is critical to their mental health and well-being. By taking proactive steps to address this issue, parents and educators can help their children navigate the complex world of social media and build healthy relationships with themselves and others.

Based on the data obtained from the question of using artificial intelligence in the future, it can be concluded that a majority of respondents are open to using AI in finance in the future, with 83 % answering either yes or absolutely yes. This suggests a growing acceptance and trust in AI-based financial services among consumers. The neutral responses (10 %) may indicate a lack of knowledge or uncertainty about AI in finance. Overall, the data suggests that there is potential for AI to be widely adopted in financial services in the future.

CONCLUSION

People's digital footprints can matter a lot in today's world--they can help or hinder someone's ability to achieve their life goals. People who behave unethically on social media can have serious consequences, both professionally

and socially. Posting online means that information can be lost forever, so it's important to use social media responsibly. Unethical behavior can also lead to privacy problems, as users are often required to share personal information that they would not otherwise share. Social media can also lead to the disclosure of personal information that could lead to a privacy violation if users don't take care to protect it. So it's important for users to be aware of the risks and dangers associated with online disclosure, and to be careful about what information they share. This could help to reduce unethical behavior and protect people's privacy online.

Navigating these challenges will require a concerted effort from social media platforms, governments, and individuals alike. It will require greater transparency around data collection and use, increased scrutiny of online content, and a commitment to responsible behavior online. Ultimately, the dark side of social media cannot be ignored if we are to build a healthier, more ethical digital world.

References

1. Social media in today's world. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://steemit.com/life/@king3071/social-media-in-today-s-world> (date of access: 14.04.2023).
2. Global social media statistics research summary 2023. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.smartinsights.com/social-media-marketing/social-media-strategy/new-global-social-media-research/> (date of access: 14.04.2023).
3. The dark side of social media networks. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.uts.edu.au/news/health-science/dark-side-social-media-networks> (date of access: 18.04.2023).
4. *Nadine Barrett-Maitland and Jenice Lynch / Social Media, Ethics and the Privacy Paradox*. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.intechopen.com/chapters/70973> (date of access: 20.04.2023).
5. Social Media Misinformation. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.stimson.org/2022/social-media-misinformation-and-the-prevention-of-political-instability-and-mass-atrocities/> (date of access: 20.04.2023).
6. Social media is particularly harmful to teens. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.appahealth.com/blog/guef4tbhjhjhhm972tpfx35cchpcpr> (date of access: 20.04.2023).
7. Маркетинг в социальных медиа. Интернет-маркетинговые коммуникации: Учебное пособие / Под ред. Л. А. Данченко. СПб.: Питер, 2013. 288 с.