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Social Networks: Harm or Benefit?

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The 21st century is the age of globalization and high technologies. So the main reason of choosing the topic is the relevance of this problem. Now the modern world is already difficult to imagine without the Internet and social networks. People spend a lot of time in virtual reality.

So the purpose of the work: to find out what impact social networks have on a person – positive or negative.

Talking about how the Internet was created, one can't but mention that the Internet is a dimensionless virtual space where you can find all that you want. The history of the Internet began in USA owing to Bob Taylor who worked in the Office of Advanced Research (ARPA) of the US Department of Defense in Washington. Its semblance of the Internet was created only for military purposes – communication between military objects in case of a nuclear war. It was named ARPANET. The network gradually developed, but was still inaccessible to the general public and was used only by scientists. Tim Berners-Lee, created a server for publishing hypertext, as well as a program for reading it, "WorldWideWeb". And already in 1991, the Internet became available to everyone [1]. The growth rate of the number of connected users in the network:

- October 1969 – in the 2 node network;
- December 1969 – increase of network nodes to 4;
- 1972 – the number of connected nodes is already 37;
- 1981 (12 years since the first message on the network)

- 213 subscribers;
- 1995 – 16 million people online;
- today, the number of Internet users exceeds 2 billion people.

The concept of “social network” was introduced in 1954 by sociologist James Barnes. In the modern sense, a social network is a platform, online service or website for building, reflecting and organizing social relationships on the Internet. In 1995 Randy Conrads created Classmates.com – the first social network. Now there is a huge number of social networks. Below are the most popular types of social networks in the world and in Belarus.

1) Facebook.

Facebook is the largest social network in the world. It was founded on February 4, 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg and his roommates (E. Saverin, D. Moskowitz and C. Hughes). The website was available only to students of Harvard University and since September 2006 – to all users of the Internet. Facebook is one of the most visited websites in the world, with more than 2 billion registered users.

2) Instagram

Instagram is an application for sharing and evaluating photos and short videos with elements of a social network. The number of users exceeds 1 billion. The owner of this service is also Facebook Inc.

3) VKontakte

VKontakte is a Russian social network, similar to Facebook. The creator of network is Pavel Durov. The number of accounts in the network exceeds 500 million now.

4) Twitter

Twitter is a social network for public messaging for Internet users. Created by Jack Dorsey in 2006, Twitter soon gained popularity around the world. It has more than 1.3 billion accounts.

5) Odnoklassniki

Odnoklassniki is a Russian social network that allows you to send messages, share photos, write comments, and more. The network was launched on March 26, 2006, and is currently used by more than 300 million people [2].

The main advantages of social networks are instant search for information on a topic of interest; communication without borders; search for people, leisure time, training, ability to express yourself.

Disadvantages are also present: negative impact on health, personal degradation, internet addiction, a big waste of money, a big waste of time, collection of personal data, risk of falling into dangerous organizations [3].

After studying a survey published on the Internet, conducted among students and teachers, the results can be summarized in the following Table 1.

Table 1. The purpose of using social networks

Goal	Students		Teachers	
	Number of respondents	Result, %	Number of respondents	Result, %
Communication	13	87	2	33
Watching movies	3	20	1	17
Listening to music	6	40	1	17
Searching for information	3	12	4	83
No goal	1	7	0	0

Next, the results of the survey in which teachers and students answered questions about the benefits and harm of the Internet were analyzed. Based on the analysis, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- the least threat is a big waste of time;

- for students, fraud is the most dangerous factor (25%), followed by mental health (22%);
- according to teachers, first of all, social networks cause damage to mental (27%) and physical (26%) health;
- teachers consider the possibility of self-study to be the most significant advantage of social networks (33%);
- students put communication first (30%);
- communication and self-expression are the least important among teachers (20%);
- among students, the ability to express themselves is the least important (4%).

The main result of this study can imply that students and teachers see more benefits than harm in social networks, although they face both the first and the second.

As a final conclusion, we can say that social network can bring considerable benefit to those who use it wisely. To minimize the negative consequences, you need to adhere to certain rules of behavior in the virtual space, monitor the amount of time spent on social networks. People cannot replace real life with virtual life, because reality is much more interesting.

References:

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