

Social Networking as Educational Tools for Today Generation

Hamzah Asyrani Sulaiman ^a, Mohd Riduan Ahmad ^b, Abdullah Bade ^c

^{a,b} Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka

^c Universiti Malaysia Sabah

Abstract

Current market trend without consent provide an efficient communication between other people with no boundaries of socialize issues. Facebook, MySpace, Friendster and Twitter are few from the most social networking application exist in the web currently for community to socialize their daily life with other people. Without correspond to reality world, they manage to sit in front of computer for hours just to update their information, playing some online games, and event managing an informal meeting with various people. Indeed, that today social gaming and networks has successfully bring our people to a new level of entertainment that never imagine compare to 10 years ago where the internet is still new for some countries. In this paper, we would like to address the potential of social network as educational tools for community based on today experiences in order to handle future needs.

Keywords: Social Network, Social Networking, Gaming Network, Facebook

1. Introduction

Social network can be defined as a group of peoples that share the same interest and tied together in one node. The node that is created by this group can be combined with another node that has particular interest in general will performed upper node [1-3]. The network of these nodes is surprisingly becoming very large as most people have more than one interest.

Online social networking that is discussed in this paper is referring to the website of online societies. Online social networking website such as Friendster, Myspace, Facebook, Blogs, Twitter, and newly introduced in 2010, Buzz has become very common among internet online users [4-6]. The online social networking starts by first she register to the website and updated his profile. Next, the website application that can automatically send email to her friends by making the website to access his email account with his concern. Finally, she starts having more friends by making the friends that she had already invited to make the group larger. Some of his friends that accepted the offer to register for the online social networking website will start do the same and the networking can become bigger within a day.

User is able to invite other users based on application that has been developed for the website. For example, mafia wars games application by Zynga [7] had widely known by facebook user where this web-based game application had registered users more than hundred millions throughout facebook. This game is embedded as

facebook application. The users will benefits from this application if they invite many other users into their facebook account at first and then invite them to mafia wars application. This increase the people exists in their facebook profile where most of the people they invited come across all over the world. The higher number of people that they obtained in the facebook, the bigger chance for them to stay strong in this game. This growth of people has helped facebook (at least for a few percentages) to gain popularity as the highest users visit (in percentage) according to Alexa [8] (refer figure 1 and 2).

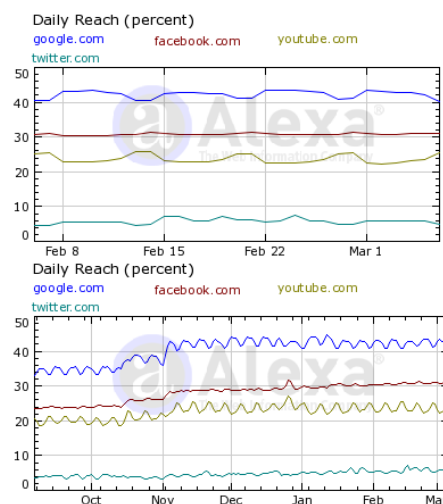


Figure 1: Daily Reach of Traffic based on alexa.com for monthly and six months duration

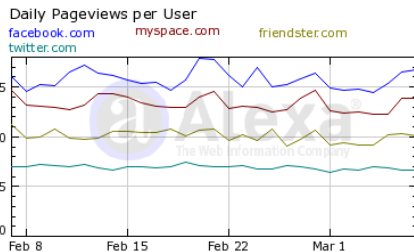


Figure 2: Daily Page views per user for social networking.

2. History of Online Social Network

2.1. Starting Social Network

The definition of Social Network and Social Networking may look the same with one another. However, based on *personone[1]*, Social Network is a social structure consists of several individuals (or organizations) that can be represented as nodes. It also tied with one or more types of interdependency, such as friendship, hobbies, interest, working area, dislike, and relationship of beliefs, knowledge, prestige or many more. Meanwhile, social networking is more suitable for our term as it involves online networking to establish community. It also represents one or more group that share the same interest that most likely to be together within one roof.

The first version of social networking starts on the web by the launching of social networking site in 1997 called SixDegrees.com. This site allowed users to create their profiles, have a list of their friends who joined them and starting from 1998, they are able to navigate through their friends list. The interesting fact is that most of this features already existed in previous community sites such as AIM and ICQ buddy list that supported lists of friends but the list is not visible to other peoples. Even though term of who started the online social networking is not very clear, but Classmates.com that establish two years before SixDegrees.com also allowed the people to affiliate with their high school or college, but their users was not be able to create profiles and have list of friends until it was updated later on. That is the reason of why SixDegrees.com became the first recognizable online social network that combined all these features into one site.

On that time, SixDegress.com promoted quite effectively as a tool to help other people who are using internet on that time to connect with their friends and relatives. They also are able to send messages to others. However, the site turned down just after the millennium of year 2000. The founder of SixDegrees.com stated that the website was on the “ahead of the current year” (A. Weinreich, personal communication, July 11, 2007) as much

people in various continents that still has low rates of internet usage. The internet growth is started immediately right after millennium year where high speed internet broadband was coming into surfaces for most countries. Users also cannot do anything except for accepting friends and most of the users were completely strangers and their mind still now wide open.

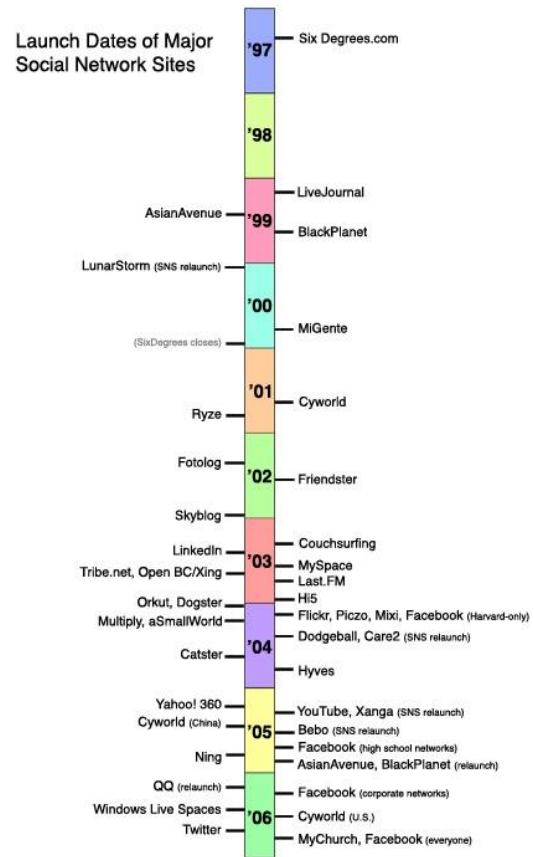


Figure 3: Social Networking Sites launch dates [3]

Starting from 1997 until 2001, various birth of site already begun to surface that combined numerous profiles and publicly articulated friends. Site such as AsianAvenue, BlackPlanet, and MiGente allowed users to create their customization profiles so users could identify their friends without waiting for approval of those connections. Live Journal that launched on 1999, listed one-directional connections on user pages. This to prevent any privacy information is being leaked to other people who are not friends with them.

The next wave of social networking sites began by the launched of Ryze.com in 2001 to help business users. The founder introduced the site to his friends – mostly members of the San Francisco business and technology community, including some entrepreneurs and the inventors behind many future social networking sites. The next site began to appear which are Tribe.net, LinkedIn, and

Friendster later on. They also believed in mind that they be able to support each other without too much competition. On that time, before the birth of Facebook, Tribe.net grew quite effectively to attract a passionate niche user base, LinkedIn is for powerful business service or professional people, and Friendster became the most significant mostly from people of Asia. Figure 3 below depicts the illustrations birth of social networking sites.

3. Analysis of Social Networking

3.1. Broad Range Social Networking Site

The development of broad range social networking sites has tremendously becoming more competitive compared to niche type of social networking sites. Broad range sites such as facebook, Friendster, myspace, twitter, and many others can be classified as a general type of social networking sites where it has various types of users. Users are able to add friends and navigate through other profiles while maintaining their privacy to only specific users. For specific people that have the same interest, they might create a group site using social networking sites function that might available for them to create a group. They also can be combined within other groups for cross interest that some users might have. However, the possibility of users to use general type of social networking site is still keep on growing as the function to have more than one group of interest is really suite their needs. Facebook for example allowed users to create and join more than one group instead of joining other types of social networking site. This is relatively much convenient compared to niche type of social networking sites.

3.2. Niche Range Social Networking Site

A niche social networking site is a little bit different compared to broad range social networking sites. It concentrates on specific users that have their specific hobby and willing to share with other users that have the same interest. Instead of going for general type of social networking site, they managed to join site with their interest only and discuss among them about their interest. They might have sub-interest but for the main topic, it still limited to specific topic. For example, Classroom 2.0 is specifically created for people to find their classmates during their school time. The discussion might go into multiples interest but they share the same interest which is the reunion of their class. There are various types of niche type social sites such as LinkedIn, Ning, and many others. Within the site, users are able to discuss topic that related to their interest. It is not for everyone to join but it is opened for all kinds of people.

4. Social Networking and Educational

According to recent survey from Grunwald Associates LLC [3], online social networking is currently growing exponentially among students that most prefer to stay online compared to other activities. They intended to spend so much time going online instead of watching television. This is positively increasing the reliability of online social networking to connect all students to join online social networking and discuss among themselves regarding their subject. They also are able to reply messaging, comment on others, sharing their photos and conduct outdoor activities instead of making a formal class. Lecturer must be able to see through the technology in order to get them excited to learn.

Surprisingly the report also stated that the student also discussed educational stuff on the social networking site. Apparently 60 percent of them who registered with social networking site talks about educational topics online. However, the government must be to control network access for student on the campus in order to avoid any unnecessary news to be travelled off the campus area. Positively, the lecturers and the parents must believe that social networking tools bring great impact for student to have a very broad and open mind for their studies. Lecturer needs to have different type of learning process on the internet. This is to make sure that the student may consider using social networking site to perform his duty as a student such as making group assignment by distributing works among them online and download some materials provided by lecturer.

The development of social networking site also helps the lecturer to create a special group for his student. By using facebook as example, function to create group make the lecturer job become much easier to handle his student. Students are able to join and discuss among themselves with their lecturer. The lecturer also can have outdoor activities with the students by just discussing the idea of activities using facebook. Latest technology from Google called Google Wave has made our sharing file much easier than any other website [9-11]. The technology consists of sharing a file that can be altered in real-time without using primitive way of sharing file such as uploading and downloading updated file. Google Wave technology enables the user A to put changes into the document for example, and at the same time B also are able to modify it at the exact time as A finished. This technology will emerge on the net after the Google Wave has been launched (right now the Google Wave is currently can be accessed through invitation by Google Inc.)

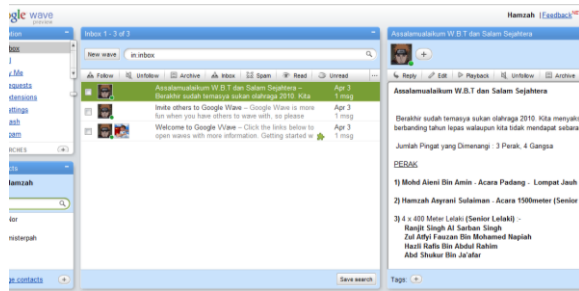


Figure 4: Google Wave

3.3 Blog

Blog is commonly described by most web communities as a type of website that the owner be able to submit their article and received comments from it [12-13]. It usually maintained periodically by the owner when some quick updates need to be applied compared to ordinary official website. Instead of commentary type system that has been applied for the blog, it also has another function of making the web more users friendly and closer to the people. Many companies have used this kind of approach in order to gain trust from its customer where the customer be able to directly confront their client for some updates and technical problems [14].

Blogs can be divided into several other functions on specific subjects. Most personal blogs is functional as personal online diaries where the users posted several types of events from day to another day. Some companies provided an article about current updates about their software. Hence, the ability of the users be able to leave comment in an interactive ways has made blog system more convenient than ordinary official website. Thus, leaving people to create a blog site compared to ordinary official website.

3.4 Tweeting

Twitter is one of a new component of social networking and microblogging service that provided the users to send short messages called tweets [15-20]. It is text-based entry consists not more than 140 characters that will update the corresponding user profile page and can be read by selected people that follow the user's profile. These followers may yet to subscribe to the user's profile in order to get news updates from the user. Some users may set up their twitter site as open access where most people are able to read it and leave some comments just like blog entry. Current technology enables the users to send updates through short message system (SMS) via mobile phone. However, it depends on charges set up by the phone service provider fees. It is useful for

emergency use where updates can be displayed instantly and one of the fastest ways to get communicate with other peoples from all around the globe. Jack Dorsey is the creator of tweets system where it started to gain popularity among web communities as a "SMS of the internet".

3.5 Real Time Collaboration and Communication Tool – Google Wave

New online tool that can be considered as social networking element is Google Wave. Launched on May 27, 2009, Google wave is an online software application from Google that can be described as a personal communication and collaboration tool. It is combination of web-based service, e-mail and instant messaging, wikis and social networking all in one place. It also consists of several tools such as grammar/spelling checking and automated translation from 40 languages. At first, it was released to developers before it is extended to almost 100,000 users during the third quarter of 2009. Now, the Google Wave has extended further its product to common users by request.

Google Wave is designed as a new tool for various types of users so they are able to continue to work on the same project or document concurrently [2, 10, 21-22]. By having a central server that act as an inbox, the users be able to create and modify the document in real-time with multiple persons. For example, person A and person B is connected to Google Wave application. Person A has created a document where he needs to working on big project that required supervision from person B. As person A is trying to edit the document, person B can alter the document or check the document for any writing that person A has made some mistakes. Person A might write down paragraph number two but at the same time and at the same file, person B can perform editing for the document. Even though the users might does not want to keep several changes, he or she can view the previous change by using a function called "blips" that provided within Google Wave application. It can display what kind of changes that has been made by some other users that might share the same file for this big project. It is almost the same with instant messaging system but Google had introduced new type of application where it combined some elements of today technology into one application.

5. Example of Online Social Networking Sites

5.1 Facebook

The introduction of facebook.com on 2004 has brought most people today into new phenomenon of social networking. The phenomenon mentioned

here is a cultural event that most people from all ages involved in this kind of activities which is having a personal profile in social networking site. World leaders, entertainers, technicians, carpenters, club presidents, and various types of persons involved in facebook. With more than double of users for this social networking site than any other social networking sites in this world, facebook.com truly shows their unique power of convincing people to use facebook.com for daily activities.

Although the primary reason for facebook at earlier age is for students and college graduate by invitation only, facebook remarkably increase the potential of social networking sites by providing them various functional on their site.

Among great functions that existed in facebook are photo tagging, wall posting, blog creation, video and application for people who developed their own application, and comments. These functions are being updated from time to time as the web technology is increasing. Additionally, facebook has one of the best security options on the internet. People who really know the person be able to accept invitation and reject invitation without the person even noticing it. It is called ignore function where it helped the user from being added by some strangers that might come across.

The only thing that is not implemented in facebook is profile page customization. The users are not being able to modify their profile page but they can put various application and links inside their profile. However, facebook profile already has great interface where the formality of this social networking site actually prevent users from uploading content that might inappropriate.

5.2 MySpace

Before the facebook.com gaining their attention of social networking world, MySpace.com is extremely popular among social networkers by receiving lot of traffics from various users. The ability to modify the content of user profile as well as upload and share video, audio and image files, MySpace.com has truly showed remarkable achievement on that time.

MySpace.com also supported blog creation for their social networking site where people can create blog and upload content according to their desire. However, the corresponding function for blog is not much compared to other blogs site such as WordPress, Blogger.com or Blogspot.

5.3 Other Social Networking Sites

Other popular social networking sites are Orkut and Friendster. Both social networking sites currently have been actively getting attention from certain parts of the region. Most people from Brazil and India from statistical data prefers to use Orkut while Friendster is for Asia countries. Meanwhile, for specific language social networking site, Qzone attracting people mainly from China and the number of user is increasing as they have very large population to cater their need of social networking site.

6. Conclusion

As a conclusion, the social networking site is a great tool that can be used for educational purpose. It inherits few elements of working together between the lecturer and the students to help them in their study. Plus, the gap between the lecturer and the student could also be reduced as well as the knowledge of their understanding in class is increased. Lecturer should be able to cater the needs of their student in making them to learn fast and grasp the outcome of the knowledge efficiently. Hence, the capability of the student should be increase and thus produce good leadership and motivation skills in their life.

Acknowledgements

This paper is support by Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka faculty grant and research is supported by Malaysian Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation under eScienceFund grant (VOT No. 79237) for thorough financial support of this research.

References

- [1] Groh, G. and V. Rappel. *Towards Demarcation and Modeling of Small Sub-Communities/Groups in P2P Social Networks*. in *Computational Science and Engineering, 2009. CSE '09. International Conference on*. 2009.
- [2] Yu, W.D. and A. Siddiqui. *Towards a Wireless Mobile Social Network System Design in Healthcare*. in *Multimedia and Ubiquitous Engineering, 2009. MUE '09. Third International Conference on*. 2009.
- [3] Huber, M., et al. *Towards Automating Social Engineering Using Social Networking Sites*. in *Computational Science and Engineering, 2009. CSE '09. International Conference on*. 2009.
- [4] Nazir, A., S. Raza, and C.-N. Chuah, *Unveiling facebook: a measurement study of social network based applications*, in *Proceedings of the 8th ACM SIGCOMM*

- conference on Internet measurement. 2008, ACM: Vouliagmeni, Greece. p. 43-56.
- [5] McCown, F. and M.L. Nelson, *What happens when facebook is gone?*, in *Proceedings of the 9th ACM/IEEE-CS joint conference on Digital libraries*. 2009, ACM: Austin, TX, USA. p. 251-254.
- [6] Colete, C., C.d. Villiers, and S. Roodt, *Facebook as an academic tool for ICT lecturers*, in *Proceedings of the 2009 Annual Conference of the Southern African Computer Lecturers' Association*. 2009, ACM: Eastern Cape, South Africa. p. 16-22.
- [7] Zynga. *Mafia Wars*. 2010; Available from: <http://www.zynga.com/games/index.php?game=mafiawars>.
- [8] Alexa. *Web Information*. 2010; Available from: www.alexacom.com.
- [9] Douglass, F., *It's All About the (Social) Network*. IEEE Internet Computing, 2010. **14**(1): p. 4-6.
- [10] Auletta, K., *Googled: The End of the World As We Know It*. 2009: Penguin Group, The. 400.
- [11] Shao, B., D. Li, and N. Gu, *An Optimized String Transformation Algorithm for Real-Time Group Editors*, in *Proceedings of the 2009 15th International Conference on Parallel and Distributed Systems*. 2009, IEEE Computer Society. p. 376-383.
- [12] He, B., et al., *An effective statistical approach to blog post opinion retrieval*, in *Proceeding of the 17th ACM conference on Information and knowledge management*. 2008, ACM: Napa Valley, California, USA. p. 1063-1072.
- [13] Seo, J. and W.B. Croft, *Blog site search using resource selection*, in *Proceeding of the 17th ACM conference on Information and knowledge management*. 2008, ACM: Napa Valley, California, USA. p. 1053-1062.
- [14] Kim, H.N., *The phenomenon of blogs and theoretical model of blog use in educational contexts*. *Comput. Educ.*, 2008. **51**(3): p. 1342-1352.
- [15] Krishnamurthy, B., P. Gill, and M. Arlitt, *A few chirps about twitter*, in *Proceedings of the first workshop on Online social networks*. 2008, ACM: Seattle, WA, USA. p. 19-24.
- [16] Cheong, M. and V. Lee, *Integrating web-based intelligence retrieval and decision-making from the twitter trends knowledge base*, in *Proceeding of the 2nd ACM workshop on Social web search and mining*. 2009, ACM: Hong Kong, China. p. 1-8.
- [17] Jansen, B.J., et al., *Twitter power: Tweets as electronic word of mouth*. *J. Am. Soc. Inf. Sci. Technol.*, 2009. **60**(11): p. 2169-2188.
- [18] Zhao, D. and M.B. Rosson, *How and why people Twitter: the role that micro-blogging plays in informal communication at work*, in *Proceedings of the ACM 2009 international conference on Supporting group work*. 2009, ACM: Sanibel Island, Florida, USA. p. 243-252.
- [19] Phelan, O., K. McCarthy, and B. Smyth, *Using twitter to recommend real-time topical news*, in *Proceedings of the third ACM conference on Recommender systems*. 2009, ACM: New York, New York, USA. p. 385-388.
- [20] Diakopoulos, N.A. and D.A. Shamma, *Characterizing debate performance via aggregated twitter sentiment*, in *Proceedings of the 28th international conference on Human factors in computing systems*. 2010, ACM: Atlanta, Georgia, USA. p. 1195-1198.
- [21] Jeanneney, J.-N., *Google and the Myth of Universal Knowledge: A View from Europe*. 2007: University of Chicago Press. 108.
- [22] Roche, K. and J. Douglas, *Beginning Java Google App Engine*. 2009: Apress. 264.