Sociology Review

ASJP Algerian Scientific Journal Platform

Volume:10 / N°:01 (2026), p 55-66

Theoretical and Practical Dimensions of Social Media: From Communication Tools to Societal Interaction

Dr. Snani Loubna

University 20 August 1955 Skikda (Algeria), l.snani@univ-skikda.dz
Laboratory of Psychological and Educational Applications Constantine 2 (Algeria)

Received: 14/05/2026 *Accepted: 23/05/2026* *Published:01/06/2026*

Abstract:

Social media networks refer to internet-based websites and applications that facilitate interaction and communication among community members via smartphones and computers. These platforms are utilized for social, recreational, or commercial purposes, streamlining information delivery to the audience. This research paper aims to provide a general overview of social media networks as a theoretical synthesis. It enables the reader to understand the essence of social media, the historical milestones of their evolution, and their significance to society by presenting their tools and operational models.

Keywords: Platforms, Social Communication, Social Media Networks, Society, Audience.

1.INTRODUCTION

The technological revolution has led to a paradigm shift globally, particularly with the emergence of social media platforms across the World Wide Web. These platforms have facilitated the formation of relationships, friendships, and both bilateral and collective discussions, employing numerous means and methods of interpersonal communication. Furthermore, the utilization of social media platforms, with their diverse forms and patterns of communication, has enhanced capabilities and shaped individual and collective attitudes toward various subjects. These platforms have contributed to significant social and economic transformations, while supporting cultural diversity and acceptance of the other. Based on the foregoing, this study provides a comprehensive theoretical overview of social media platforms, their evolution, as well as their diverse tools and models.

2.Social Media Platforms

2.1The Concept of Social Media Platforms

The *Online Dictionary for Library and Information Science* (ODLIS) defines social networking sites as websites that form massive electronic communities, providing a set of services designed to enhance communication and interaction among social network members. These services and tools include networking, friendship, instant messaging, creating interest groups and pages for individuals and institutions, participating in events, and sharing media such as photos, videos, and software with others (Bouhadjar & Bouamama, 2023, p. 34).

The concept of electronic social networks emerged as a socio-philosophical term as early as the eighteenth century. However, the novel development lies in transforming it from a social hypothesis into a technical reality via the Internet and advanced communication tools. This transition has shifted the hypothesis into cyberspace, creating a new global phenomenon (Dradji, 2017, p. 202).

It is also defined as a network comprising a group of individuals who share the same interests, inclinations, and desire to cultivate friendships through the use of the World Wide Web. Similarly, it is defined as a system of electronic networks that allows subscribers to create their own profiles, thereby linking them through an electronic social system to other members who share identical interests and hobbies (Yahiaoui & Four, 2019, p. 108).

Moreover, they can be defined as web-based technological applications that facilitate human interaction and permit the seamless transfer and exchange of electronic data. They offer users the ability to find others who share the same interests, giving rise to what is known as virtual communities, where users can aggregate into social entities that mirror real-world frameworks (Soltana & Al-Ghali, 2021, p. 562).

Social media platforms are a collection of internet-based websites that enable the formation of networks among friends or professional acquaintances, providing their members with a suite of tools and interactive interfaces for presentation and communication (Belalia, 2014, p. 321).

They are also conceptualized as services established and programmed by major corporations to aggregate users and friends, share activities and interests, seek new friendships, and discover the interests and activities of others. Most contemporary social networks function as websites offering users a range of services, including instant messaging, private messaging, email, video, blogging, and file sharing, among other services (Dehimi et al.2012, p. 254).

Furthermore, they are defined as electronic websites that allow individuals to present their identities and participate in social networks through which they establish social relations. They are also identified as digital social networks characterized by social identities created by individuals or organizations that share bonds resulting from social interaction. These networks are established to expand and activate professional or friendship-based relationships (Sadaoui & Al-Haj Salem, 2020, p. 731)

Similarly, they constitute websites that form massive electronic communities, providing a set of services designed to enhance communication and interaction among social network members. These services and tools include networking, friendship, messaging, instant chatting, establishing interest groups, creating pages for individuals and institutions, participating in events, and sharing media such as photos, videos, and software with others (Hassi et al.,2018, p. 354).

2.2 Historical Stages of Social Media Evolution:

- ✓ **1960–1970 (The Primary Nucleus):** The Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) initiated the development of the military network "ARPANET" to interconnect four mainframe computers across the United States.

- ✓ **1980–1990 (Internationalization and Standardization):** The network expanded to encompass universities and research centers, growing to 23 host computers, before extending internationally to London and Norway. This era witnessed the segregation of data protocols into TCP/IP and the establishment of the first digital newsgroup.

- ✓ **1990–2000 (The World Wide Web and Social Inceptions):** Tim Berners-Lee introduced the concept of the World Wide Web (WWW) alongside the HTTP protocol, propelling the number of connected computers to one million. The first graphical web browser, Mosaic, emerged but was subsequently surpassed by Internet Explorer. Concurrently, the commercial sector entered the domain to connect individuals, and the first recognizable social networking site, SixDegrees.com, was launched for university students.

- ✓ **2002–2004 (Indexing and Proliferation):** The Google search engine indexed three billion websites as the number of connected devices surged to 200 million. This period marked the launch of Myspace and LinkedIn, alongside the widespread proliferation of blogs.

- ✓ **2005–2006 (The Media Era and Expansion):** The video-sharing platform YouTube was launched, and Facebook was founded at Harvard University before its subsequent global expansion. The strategic focus shifted toward highly interactive websites that facilitated file and music sharing.

- ✓ **2009 -2010 (The New Generation and Growth):** The Web 2.0 era commenced, delivering accelerated services. The role of the internet amplified to become the "voice of the world," with the user base reaching two billion people (30% of the global population) by early 2011, amid projections to reach 50% by the end of the decade.

- ✓ **2011–2015 (The Smartphone Explosion and Visual Content):** The ubiquity of smartphones catalyzed a shift toward mobile-responsive network designs. Platforms relying entirely on visual elements and ephemeral content, such as Instagram and Snapchat, were launched. The global internet user base surpassed the three-billion threshold in 2014.

- ✓ **2016–2020 (The Short-Form Video Revolution):** TikTok rose to prominence, revolutionizing content consumption patterns through short, vertical video formats. This shift compelled traditional platforms (such as Facebook and YouTube) to re-engineer their algorithms and introduce equivalent features (Reels and Shorts) to maintain user retention.

- ✓ **2021–2025 (Digital Maturity and Rebranding):** The Facebook company rebranded as "Meta" to pivot toward virtual environments (the Metaverse), while Twitter transitioned to "X." The global internet population exceeded five billion users, and the concept of "social commerce" (direct in-app purchasing) became an integral component of the digital economy.

- ✓ **The Year 2026 (The Current Landscape: Artificial Intelligence and Billion-User Networks):**The Pervasiveness of Generative AI: Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become an default, indispensable component of social network architecture. The monthly active user base for AI-driven tools has surpassed one billion, heavily utilized for content generation, curation, and personalization.

2.3 Characteristics of Social Media Platforms:

The core characteristics of social media platforms manifest in the following dimensions:

- **Comprehensiveness (Universality):** These platforms dissolve geographical and spatial barriers, effectively dismantling international borders. Consequently, individuals in the East can seamlessly communicate with those in the West through the global network.

- **Interactivity:** Within this digital environment, an individual functions not merely as a passive recipient or reader, but simultaneously as a sender, writer, and active participant. This dynamic eradicates the rigid, one-way passivity inherent in traditional legacy media—such as television and print newspapers—by allocating an active participatory space for both the viewer and the reader (Soltana & Al-Ghali, 2021, p. 565).

- **Participation:** Social media channels actively stimulate contributions and feedback from interested stakeholders. This mechanism blurs the traditional demarcation line that historically separated mainstream media organizations from their audiences.

- **Openness:** The majority of social media platforms offer open-ended services that encourage feedback, participation, and the collaborative creation or modification of pages. Social media networks distinguish themselves from conventional media by facilitating two-way communication, thereby enabling immediate engagement and interaction with events, news, or informational data.

- **Versatility (Multi-utility):** Social media networks exhibit high levels of flexibility and adaptability. They are readily utilized by students for

educational purposes, by scholars to disseminate knowledge and instruct the public, by authors to maintain direct communication with their readership, and by general community members to sustain social ties.

- **Ease of Use (User-friendliness):** In addition to textual scripts and simplified linguistic structures, social networks utilize symbolic icons and visual imagery. These elements lower technical barriers, enabling users to effortlessly convey ideas and engage with others.

- **Cost-efficiency (Economic Viability):** These platforms optimize individual investments of effort, time, and financial resources due to free registration and subscription models. Consequently, the capacity to occupy a digital space for social networking is democratized, ensuring it is neither restricted to affluent capital owners nor monopolized by exclusive socio-economic groups.

3.Tools of Social Media Platforms:

These tools manifest in the following components:

Profile Pages: These digital profiles display an individual's name along with primary demographic and personal data, such as gender, date of birth, interests, and profile pictures. The profile serves as the gateway to an individual's digital presence; through its main interface, visitors can view recent activities, mutual friends, newly uploaded media, and other digital footprints.

Participation: Social media mechanisms stimulate contributions and feedback from engaged individuals, effectively blurring the demarcation line between mass media organizations and the public.

Openness: The majority of social media channels provide open-ended services for feedback, engagement, and page modification. They actively

encourage voting, commenting, and information sharing, with minimal barriers to accessing or utilizing content.

Friends / Connections: These terms denote individuals with whom a user establishes a digital relationship for specific purposes. General social platforms designate an added user as a "friend," whereas professional networking platforms utilize terms such as "connection" or "relation."

Sending Messages: This feature facilitates the transmission of direct messages to an individual, irrespective of whether they belong to the user's established list of friends or connections.

Photo Albums: Social networks permit users to generate unlimited digital albums and upload hundreds of images, facilitating the seamless sharing of visual media with their network of friends (Derradji, et al.,2017, pp. 205–206).

4.Models of Social Media Platforms:

The predominant models of social media platforms manifest in the following entities:

- ✓ **X Platform (formerly Twitter):** A social networking service predicated upon a mutual-following framework. It commenced experimental operations in 2006 and was incorporated independently in 2007. It is characterized by the exclusive exchange of short microblogs (tweets), initially restricted to a maximum threshold of 140 characters, while offering advanced privacy parameters to limit profile visibility solely to approved followers.

- ✓ **YouTube:** A free global video-sharing and broadcasting platform founded in 2005. Historically, it relied on Adobe Flash technology to render animations and video clips. Content privacy settings range from public dissemination to private restrictions. Its material encompasses professional

productions (films, music, television broadcasts) alongside amateur content. Today, the platform serves as a strategic instrument for artists and politicians for zero-cost promotion, and as an official channel adopted by governments and universities to broadcast e-learning sessions and public awareness campaigns.

- ✓ **Facebook:** The globally preeminent social network. Launched in February 2004 as an exclusive academic network for Harvard University and American academic institutions, it expanded accessibility to the general public in September 2006 for any user possessing a valid email address. It enables subscribers to construct personal profiles, aggregate friends, and expand interaction boundaries to reach friends-of-friends, alongside joining specialized educational and professional organizations or groups.

- ✓ **Instagram:** A social networking service and mobile application primarily centered around visual content. It enables users to establish personal profiles via smartphones to engage in digital interactions, upload and share photos or videos, consume multimedia content, and initiate live broadcasting streams.

5.Conclusion:

Social media platforms have transitioned into a global focal point, granting individuals the agency to freely express paradigms and demonstrate unique talents and skill sets. Concurrently, they have evolved into primary income sources for certain demographics and entry gateways for lucrative commercial enterprises due to their capacity to convey information seamlessly via audiovisual stimuli. Furthermore, these sites have continuously augmented their subscriber bases owing to cost-free service models that have deepened societal integration. Based on the foregoing, the following research question arises:

How can social media platforms transform into a hazardous social affliction negatively impacting the dynamics of Algerian families, despite their ostensible foundational premise of converting the globe into a small village to facilitate interpersonal communication and discursive exchange?

6. Bibliography List :

1. Belalia, Khadidja ,(2014) Social media networks and their role in promoting hotel services, Journal of Law and Human Sciences (Economic Studies), Algeria, Vol. 08, No. 02
2. Ben Slim, Houcine & Souici, Ahmed ,(2017) The impact of social networks on society, Sociologia Journal, Algeria, Vol. 01, No. 01.
3. Bouhadjar, Amira & Bouamama, Larbi ,(2023) Social media networks as a new mechanism for political communication, Afak Journal for Political and Legal Research, Algeria, Vol. 06, No. 01
4. Derradji, Ibtissam ,(2017) Social media networks: A virtual space for electronic communication, Al-Risala Journal for Media Studies, Algeria, Vol. 01, No. 01, pp. 202, 205, 206.
5. Dehimi, Zineb ,(2012) Facebook social media websites, Journal of Human Sciences, Algeria, No. 26.
6. Hassi, Malika, (2018) Social media networks and commercial marketing: A study on importance and features, Al-Hiwar Al-Thaqafi Journal, Algeria, Vol. 09, No. 01
7. Saadaoui, Fatima Zohra & Attia, El Hadj Salem ,(2020) Social media networks and the formation of virtual values among Algerian youth – Facebook as a model, Al-Bahith Journal in Human and Social Sciences, Algeria, Vol. 12, No. 02
8. Yahiaoui, Fatima & Four, Khadidja ,(2019) The use of social media networks and its impact on social relations "Facebook and Twitter as a model" a field study on a sample of students from the Faculty of Human

and Social Sciences at the University of Blida 02, Afak Journal of Sociology, Algeria, Vol. 09, No. 01.

9. Zakaria, Soltana Abderrahmane & Ben Lebbad, El Ghali ,(2021) The impact of social communication reality on modern society, Al-Hikma Journal for Philosophical Studies, Algeria, Vol. 09, No. 02, pp. 562, 565.