

**SPECIAL FEATURE**

Social Media: the new frontier

It is difficult to imagine that the origins of social media are heavily intertwined with the purpose of matchmaking, specifically matrimonial sites. Small wonder then that the YouTube we know and love today had a completely different agenda when it was first conceived. The founders built it as an online dating website where biodatas would be uploaded in the form of short videos inspired by 'Hot or Not', further reinforcing the fact that the first-generation social networking mind-set was specifically based on romantic partnership. Thankfully, those days are behind us. Social media now has different purposes and different outlets which we are free to subscribe to. People obviously do not look for romance on LinkedIn.

Shadi.com came at a time when considering outlets like Facebook and Twitter in the same tier of intellectual necessity as education was unimaginable.

On that note, it probably wouldn't sound surprising to know that the education system has integrated social media to the syllabus. It's 2018 and some classes depend on Facebook groups to stay updated with their courses. And because of this, you end up adding new people in your friends list, almost out of compulsion. You see them in all the classes, and work together a number of times, but does this qualify you as buddies simply because you are stated as such on Facebook?

Leaving social media-based trivia aside for a moment, there is no denying that our entire way of communicating with friends and family have changed drastically since the introduction of this new medium. The main goal of socialising with another individual or group is to exemplify what all the participants of the group have in common, and occasional fun debates that keeps this bond interesting. Retrospectively, people from the pre-Facebook era would gather in eateries and discuss what's on their mind, but now, tagging your buddy in memes is the way you let them know that they are at the back of your mind.

You can ponder if sharing memes is an

act of socialising. You are still sharing your thoughts, but of course, with the help of links to articles and videos, and especially memes, you are reminded of the bond you have with your friends. In short, memes can be seen as the new age Hallmark Cards. Hallmark has greetings for every occasion, and in that same manner, there are memes for just about everything.

With the influx of digitalised ways of expressing yourself, people are creating new dimensions to the definition of socialising. Even when you meet a friend in person, you want to share something online that struck your interest. A person's interest in things acts somewhat like a thumbnail of their personality. So, instead of sharing encoded sentences with feelings that we can speak out loud, we find links to some



shockingly relevant content, such as 9gag and UniLad. And the scary part of this is that these posts tend to float on your homepage, saving you the trouble of having to look for them.

Online socialising is extremely accessible. We all know that comment sections are essentially opinion blogs for many users, and the memes are a vital part of that too. It's just how we socialize and communicate in 2018. It could very well be that our current vocabulary just isn't enough to convey what we wish to express online.

While all this communication and networking is good, what do you do when you need to carve up some space for yourself?

Or maybe you added someone you wished to avoid but cannot, so you wish to keep them in the dark regarding your day to day social media activities. If you have never wondered about the consequences of adding up every single person you ever came across, now might be a good time for some second thoughts.

Here's a scenario; you are at an event, you take a nice shot of the venue, the picturesque décor and the good looking food. Let us not forget the very important selfie that might fetch you a few hundred likes, some from your closed ones, and some from people you have never met. Looking at that like/comment or follower count go up may look nice, but it won't be so nice if some random stranger came to know more about you than they should. If you had such an encounter, do not be surprised as this is considered common in this digital social media age. Although having tons of these "followers" may bring a momentary ego boost, it also brings with its own case of headaches.

DODGING BAD MOMENTS

While some of us love to share soothing origami videos and tasty recipes, others love to share a handful on politics and other debatable topics.

In this day and age, there are few things that fail to not offend millennials, which makes it all the more important to keep our distinguished thoughts to ourselves, and not on our timelines. We do not want to spend the next day being roasted at work, and nor do we need the bad impression.

UNFILTERED FRIENDS

Accepting a friend request simply on the basis of the number of mutual friends you have with the person is a recipe for disaster. You are giving a stranger access to your personal information, photos, work, family, interests and so much more. Although this particular thing has sparked lots of new friendships, it has also brought in a lot of trouble. A common practice today is adding up all the people you have ever met, from that one person you met at French class to

your cook, and they all have access to your pictures and personal information. And having our gym buddy notified every time we install a new app is not something we would want, and neither would they.

KEEPING IT PROFESSIONAL

Private and professional work related posts need to be separated for many reasons. We do not really need our boss to see that photo of last night's party we were at, nor do we want them to. Just think of that time you called in sick but your boss catches you checking in at Coffee World; not the best scenario! To keep our dignity, and our jobs intact and embarrassment free, privacy is more than required.

THE DARK SIDE OF FACEBOOK

Reading up till now might give the illusion that not keeping track of your online privacy could lead to slight embarrassments or awkward moments, but things in the digital world are much scarier if you aren't careful. From dangerous stalkers to identity theft, the options to have your content used without permission are practically endless, and so are the dangers that come with it. Having basic information like our birthdays, names, schools and jobs set to *Public* may seem normal, but that is more than enough for people to get your entire history down. Even the small things like an occasional check-ins, can be extremely harmful.

Of course, we are not suggesting moving into a cave and resorting to living off the grid, but clearing out the privacy setting for each and every post might just be worth those extra minutes – it can ensure safety both in and out of Facebook.

Sharing is caring, but when strangers start to care, things can get out of hand. So, unless it is an undirected casual post, or maybe your favourite meme, Facebook and preferably all other social media sites are better off maintained in private mode. No more creepy stalkers or the "nyc lagca appi" pick-ups.

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