



An argument for social media

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Social media has been under attack since its inception. It's a useless tool that wastes our time and makes us lose touch with reality. It distances you from the real people in your life instead of bringing you closer. It's the reason for the collapse of the family. It corrupts the youth and makes them self-obsessed. It incites violence and hate. It spreads false information.

Yet, despite all those claims, many of which I have agreed with over the course of time, I'm here making a case for social media. And that is because, regardless of how wrong I would prefer to be when I say this, social media offers certain undeniable advantages which the current world sorely needs.

When it comes to rapid, uncensored spread of information, social media has no parallel. This spread of information is no joke. It helps save lives. There are countless instances where the police have convicted criminals after receiving tip-offs via social media, or fire departments have gotten to the scene after being alerted through a social platform.

It is also easier than ever to donate to causes you support. For example the legal fund for the "Time's Up" movement has raised over twenty-two million dollars over the course of the last two years. Getting medical aid for rare expensive diseases is a common use of this opportunity. Numerous lives have been saved due to the social media platforms that allow people to

donate micro funds to help others who live on the other side of the world. GoFundMe pages for victims of all kinds of catastrophes, natural and man-made, are highly popular and help millions. The information regarding these is almost always advertised through social media.

Moreover, animal rights activism has social media to thank for all the great strides that have been made over the past decade. According to a survey by the American Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) in 2018, general awareness about those shelters surveyed increased 86% due to their social media activities and adoptions went up 66%. Social movements in general have gravitated toward social media to mobilize resources and frame the issues, and have made tremendous use of it.

Furthermore, freely speaking out against larger powers and getting access to an audience still remains almost exclusive to social media. When you're being harassed or discriminated against at work, when you have been cheated by some large corporation or powerful individual, or even when you have gotten food poisoning from eating at a well-known establishment, spreading this information to the masses in order to receive your justice or warn others of the experience would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, without social media.

In recent times we may feel as though violence and discrimination have peaked. However, that perception is actually a by-product of information finally being out in the open. Violence and discrimination

on every level based on various unfounded grounds have been around forever. Only now, these events aren't as easy to suppress. The world knows, and we have social media to thank for any and all steps that are finally being taken to right the wrongs.

Just like any other tool, depending on how you use it, social media can cause both help and harm. There are always those who will misuse its powers. Nevertheless, between having the choice to pick what is true and correct from a barrage of mixed information, or being force-fed information that is censored and filtered to fit personal biases and forward agendas, we should always choose the former, with conviction in our right to judge for ourselves and employ our inherent ability to reason.

Another vista that has boomed due to the advent of social media is e-commerce. Traditional advertisement is rapidly becoming secondary to its digital counterpart. Brick and mortar businesses are now facing serious competition from online stores. Entrepreneurs have multiple platforms to use to appeal to their target demographic. People have more opportunity now than ever to showcase their talents and take up opportunities that would have never sprung up were it not for social media.

Even though they certainly still exist, the barriers to entering a new market are irrefutably lower than ever before. Does it annoy me when I see that every new person I meet seems to run an online business for clothes or make-up or crafts? Sure. Not all products that rise up will be to everyone's tastes.

Would I prefer it go back to how things were before? Not in a million years. They have every right to display their creativity and marketing skills in whatever way they deem appropriate, and the fact that that is now possible is paramount. What we don't seem to realise is that our previous generations would have given an arm and a leg to have a platform as versatile and functional as social media.

Having said all of that, however, with all the previously unfathomable places where technology has taken us, and is still taking us today, with the immense accessibility social media provides us, and with all the incredible things we can now do with a tap of our finger, what are most of us really doing? The most common use of social media still remains self-advertisement. Seeking external validation online has turned people into dopamine addicts. With the entire world at our fingertips, somehow we have chosen to use these incredibly powerful websites to bring the focus right back to our own selves.

Despite all the benefits of social media, as I scroll through my newsfeed and discover another inane, sometimes life threatening #challenge, I sigh. It seems that my admiration for individual human achievement and my disappointment in collective human failure to utilise them for the right reasons are doomed to coexist and grow forever exponentially.

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