SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT
OF INTERNET SOCIAL NETWORKS
Survey on Facebook network

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Introduction
The rise of social networks has engendered in theory and practice a hot debate on such a weird phenomenon. The various opinions already put forward stress out both the associated benefits and risks encountered by the individual and gender communities. Therefore, we thought it appropriate to approach the social networks on scientific and objective grounds while emphasizing our point of view on this issue. The present survey is meant to investigate the social networks phenomenon, to reveal the core of concepts related, and the developments of such internet networks, alongside with positive effects or risks for individuals, organization and society; moreover it is designed to provide helpful information to authorized people in order to predict those economic and social effects entailed by social networks so as to develop efficient management procedures coping with the influence of internet social networks onto human behavior.

Social networks – a questionable reality
Lately, the social networks have been subject to numerous theoretical studies which made it clear that a social network is first of all a cluster of people keeping in touch with one another in order to reach the same targets. A social network is often an IT network of internet users relying on certain websites where users can subscribe and interact with other peers already subscribed. Such social networks are part of the brand new global phenomenon called Web 2.0.1 Consequently, the members of a social network are connected to each other on informal grounds, with no ties involved, however contributing by all means to the collection and dissemination of information all over the world through the web. The name of such an IT network of users could stand for an “internet users network”. The ways and concepts favoring the gathering of such a social network disclose the sheer desire of the user of applying to it, while navigating through various profiles and information, absorbing the latter in the process, and using several applications, briefly meaning to spend online more time than required as revealed by figures recorded.

What most users ignore is that according to terms of agreement when doing click on "accept", they practically and forever grant to Facebook network, a right of property on all information and public image. With no consent at all several users have seen their image turned into private trade advertisement. In an eye blink everything is published including private photos, political option, state of mind, and individual interests, even address of domicile, all of these likely to be accessed by thousands of users with no permission granted. Furthermore, the social networks can also be a promotional instrument for various businesses, products and last but not least for people coming from number of environments and communities (political-economic-financial, business, mass-media, show biz, sport etc)².

1 Implementing and exploring new organisational posibilities of the WEB
2 Presidents of states, CEOs etc.
Nowadays, the best known social web networks in the world are: Facebook - about 750 mil. members (September 2011) worldwide; Flickr – world network for information linked to image and photo; Hi5 – second in rank among the most visited social networks in Romania; LinkedIn – for career and professional relations management; Lokalisten – 2.8 mil. in Germany; Myspace – around 220 mil. users worldwide (March 2009); SchülerVZ + studiVZ + meinVZ – over 13.1 mil. pupils and students – in German; StayFriends – more than 7.5 mil.; Twitter – roughly 20-25 mil. members (July 2009) – for quick mass dissemination of brief text news; Wer-kennt-wen – 5.5 mil. in Germany (translation: who knows who); YouTube – for information type video clip

Presently, the number of social networks in Romania exceeds 50.

Within such an ever changing dynamics, we take into consideration the Facebook case which encompasses now 250 million photos and 2 billion Likes a day with more than 800 million users of which over 50% access Facebook daily. The network is available in 70 foreign languages, with more than 250 million photos downloaded in it every day. Companies are also to be found in social networks. Specifically, the top of 5 companies includes: Coca-Cola – 34 million; Disney – 28 million; MTV – 28 million; Starbucks – 25 million; Oreo – 23 million.

The economic and social impact of internet social networks

Lately, mass communication through social networks is obviously far-reaching, even worldwide. The economic and political analysts believe that without social networks, events would have evolved differently.

We have every right to wonder about the aftermath of recent events (2011) particularly affected by communication through social networks, such as: riots in Egypt conducive to dismissal of Hosni Mubarak, the state president; people upsurge in Tunis resulting in the upheaval of president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali; evidence of plagiarism as for instance the doctorate work of the German ex-Defense minister Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg; the public protest and citizens’ upsurge against the railways project „Stuttgart 21” (Germany); the social movements type „Wallstreet” organized under pretence of a protest directed at the financial world (USA, Rome, London).

Or we could mention the influence of YouTube, facebook and twitter networks having already changed thoroughly the showbiz or the entertainment industry.

From HR viewpoint, Facebook proves to be a most helpful instrument…but only for learning data on prospective candidates not for accessing the working place site.

On domestic level, in Romania, 84.8% of the Romanian companies are currently using or intend to use social networks for recruitment. At least this is revealed by a comparative survey of a joint team of Romanian and American students involved in an EMBA program organized by ASEBUSS and Kennesaw State University, Atlanta\(^3\). The research was made by face-to-face interviews and online poll, with over 200 HR experts and managers for staff recruitment attending, both Romanians and Americans. Under the title „Social Networking – A valuable instrument for recruitment”, the survey was presented during a meeting of the ASEBUSS EXEC-EDU HR Club. Among the goals set by the operators the most important was to assess to what extent the social networks can affect the recruiting process in Romania and in USA. However, the followings were also considered: comparison of business practices in both countries, the ways companies apply such instruments and whether they can account for a viable recruitment alternative.

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\(^3\) www.asebuss.ro
Which are the reasons for employers navigation through social networks? The research results underscored the followings: cut of recruitment and associated expenses; collection of references or connections of those people having submitted their resume to the network; finding prospective candidates who are not specifically looking for another job; company brand fame, tailor-made. The survey points out that the positions prevalent through social networks lie with middle management (3-6 years of experience) and lower management (1-2 years of experience). Almost 70% of employers prefer LinkedIn.com in their quest to find the right staff, and their number keeps growing to gain other networks such as Facebook and Twitter.

More than half of American companies (54%) deny to their employees the right of using socializing sites as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and MySpace when on duty. Other 19% of firms allow employees to use such sites for business purposes only while 16% permit personal use with some limitations though. Presently, only 10% of the 1,400 American companies questioned admit not being bothered by the fact that their employees access social networks while on duty. Nucleus Research adverted data proving that the efficiency of those companies which allow free use of Facebook while on duty goes down by 1.5%. The same survey applied to 237 employees also reveals that 77% of the employees having an account on Facebook made use of it at work. Company Nucleus admitted in July that "some" employees used to spend up to 2 hours of their working time with the socializing site. The survey did not specify how many employees were included to this range but it was indicative that one of 33 used his Facebook account on duty, only. From these, 87% used to say that they accessed the site for no particular reason.

When analyzing the issue of the socializing site from a psychological viewpoint we find out that Facebook fosters the self mistrust of users, particularly among women, who are more vulnerable since their self-esteem is rooted in relationships. He says that the socializing piers have changed the ways of communication among individuals from certain social backgrounds. According to market research, the social networks have become a family substitute, particularly in such countries as the UK, where family relationships have turned worse. In the opinion of Smallwood, at least 10% of the British are vulnerable to pathological socializing addiction. He believes that the Facebook problem lies with the matter of gaining new relations only which leads to a process growing into addiction. Getting new friends results into a competition - one is judged by the number of friends online. You strive to gather ever more friends which eventually turns you into a different person. It may seem surprising that even the Pope of Rome mentions in an objective statement the benefits of the Facebook network. He blessed the socializing sites of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube and expressed his opinions on digital world by means of a special message called "Truth, proclamation and life authenticity in the digital epoch". Nevertheless into his message the Pope reiterated some of his major issues in last years among which the benefits and perils of the digital epoch. He emphasized that the socializing sites are a wonderful way of building up relations and communities but warned
against superseding the real relationships by the internet friendships, also suggesting that people should depict genuine profiles onto such piers. During this year, the representatives of Catholic Church have launched another channel on YouTube, showing video clips with Pope and iBreviary, an application of iPhone, paving the way of believers to the holy texts.

Conclusions

The social networks phenomenon is in full swing of development bringing about several benefits but also many drawbacks. We cannot and shouldn’t ignore the facilities provided by such phenomenon within the society we share, not to mention the management processes involved. Therefore this instrument should be used efficiently to promote business products and services, with due consideration to totally avoid personal losses /damages either material or spiritual.

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