

International Conversation Cafe

Lifestyle Topic: Social Media, Smart Phones, and Favorite Apps

If you Google the words, “How has social media changed...” five possible endings to that sentence are suggested.

1. How has social media changed society?
2. How has social media changed communication?
3. How has social media changed marketing?
4. How has social media changed politics?
5. How has social media changed us?

Obviously, social media changes many aspects of our lives.

What are some of the things you enjoy about social media?

Technology changes the ways we communicate with others.

One 2014 study followed 51 kids who spent five days at an outdoors camp — no phones or laptops allowed. After time away from technology, the children were better able to read facial expressions and identify the emotions of actors in videos they were shown, compared with a control group of kids who didn't attend the camp. <https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/the-big-questions/your-smartphone-may-actually-be-changing-human-race-n743866>

On the other hand, some say that social media expands and enriches our friendships because it is easier to keep in touch with people especially when we move away. A 2011 survey by Pew Research backs this up, suggesting people who communicate using social media and mobile phones have more close friends than those who don't. But the long-term effects of technology use on our social networks are still unknown, Hampton says. <https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/the-big-questions/your-smartphone-may-actually-be-changing-human-race-n743866>

Do you look at technology as an advantage or disadvantage in maintaining and furthering friendships? Explain.

Is it possible to be excessive when it comes to using technology to connect with others? Explain.

One problem identified with the constant flow of information through internet access is that some people complain of information overload, that is of having too much information. There are two results from having so much information at our fingertips. One has to do with decision making. Looking into a product such as a car model is likely to turn up conflicting information making the process to find accurate information more time consuming and difficult.

The other problem has to do with our compulsion to constantly check personal messages whether it is through e-mail, Messenger, Twitter, or Group Me. Researchers have found that this compulsion lowers productivity and takes away our ability to concentrate.

Do you ever feel overloaded and distracted by too much information?

What do you do about it?

Obviously, social media is a phenomenon that has a profound impact on our lives. Carrie Kerpin, writing for Forbes magazine, writes that social media changes us because we tend to compare ourselves with other people that post. Since most people post the best of their lives, it leaves others who look on with a feeling of less self-confidence, not being able to measure up to other people.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/carriekerpen/2016/04/21/how-has-social-media-changed-us/#616353495dfc>

Some people call Instagram Insta-envy because we tend to compare the great appearance of other people's lives with the insecurities we feel.

How do you think social media has changed you?

Do you feel more or less confident of yourself knowing that others have access to information about you on social media?

How do you decide what to share on social media?

We all recognize the convenience of technology. Whereas once one had to be at a library and send for a certain book or journal, we can access information easily from almost anywhere.

What are your favorite apps?

Why do you like them?

Finally, we have to consider children and their interest in smart phones. If you want to experience information overload, begin reading on this topic!

In *Psychology Today*, Victoria L. Dunckley, MD says this about giving a smart phone to a middle schooler (age 11-14), "Because the midbrain is reorganizing itself and risk-taking is high and impulse control is low, I can't imagine a worse time in a child's life to have access to social media than middle school."

Do you think children should have smart phones? If so, at what age?

What advice would you give parents about their children and social media?

