

Pros and Cons of Social Media on People in China

Li Yupeng, Tian Jiahui, Li Yaxi, Mr. Yacoub

I. INTRODUCTION

Social media has an important role in people's life now. It is changing people's life and the way people interact with each other. "Web 2.0" was first mentioned in a conference in 2004 and since then it led the evolution of social media (Kaplan Heinlein 59). Nowadays the most popular definition for social media can be: "A group of Internet-based applications that built on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content" (Kaplan Heinlein 59). In Emerson's 2003 paper, social media refers to "the interactions among people in which they create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas utilizing social exchange theory" (335).

Social media is becoming more and more important. It has become the main tool for people's communication. On the other hand, this tool can also cause some bad changes on people's life. Our research "Pros and cons of social media on people in China" helps people understand social media. For the part of pros, people can know more about the right ways to use social media and search for new areas when using social media. On the contrary, the part of cons shows people how to protect themselves and treat social media in an objective attitude.

However, it is unavoidable that there are some limitations existing in our research. This research needs different kinds of participants from different ages and jobs. But, we cannot ensure each age group has the same number of participants. Due to limited time and place, the major group of the participants in our research are students from 15-20 years old. At the same time, the number of participants from 31-40, 41-50 and over 50 years old only occupies a little percentage. The kind of job and the period of age of the participants are single. This phenomenon causes indirectly that the result of research cannot reflect opinions to social media from all of the people.

The use of social media can be different from people to people. In this paper, our research group mainly studies how the use of social media is different between people with different ages, the pros and cons of social media on people's life, and the suggestion our research group gives about how to use social media and how to do the research about social media.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media has been widely studied by many researchers. Jason Abbott asks in his 2012 paper that how new social media influences the social-politics. He claims that information platforms produced by new social media influences region authoritarian system in a democratizing way. For example, country leaders may have their own social media's accounts or they may use social media to interact with the public in some time. Jason also mentions that in recent years, there are many revolutions happen in East Asia after message sent on social media (333-357).

In their 2012 paper, Andrew T. Stephen and Jeff Galak claim that social media has many effects on sales and marketing and the levels of effects are different between different types of social media. They illustrate that there are three types of social media distinguished by marketers, they are paid media; own media; and earned media. All of them pay an important role in the relationship with marketing. During the study, researchers also analyze the data about 14 months of sales and social media, then they come to the conclusion (624- 639).

Kristie VanAuken's 2014 paper argues that the relationship between airline and airport is enhanced by using social media. She thinks that a solid brand foundation is the key to a successful social media strategy. Also, partnerships between

airports and their partners can increase both of their interests. VanAuken is the director of airport marketing and communication programs at Akron-Canton Airport. She mentions in the paper that airports can gain feedback from the customers through social media. Since the beginning of the use of the social media at the Akron-Canton in 2007, social media has greatly influenced the way airport can communicate with the customers and it has also changed the experience of the travelers (109). Similarly, David Lee King's 2015 paper shows that the importance of social media in a library. He discusses the statistics about social media use in the U.S. in 2014 and finds out that people mainly use social media to stay connected with their family and friends. Also in order to improve the quality of service, a library uses social media to help it reach and get feedback from its customers. The writer lists some reasons of the use of social media in a library. For example: getting responses, taking advantage of mobile technology, and extending reach (7).

In their 2015 paper, Scott W.H Young and Doralyn Rossmann demonstrate the importance of founding library through new social media. During applying social media into daily life, their Twitter community grew one hundred percent in one year. This means 275 percent growth in user interactions. Some important parts of the research are guidelines of setting up community and the engagement between community and social media online. Young and Rossmann also adopt analysis approach to study and understand details of founding community and improving social media (20-37).

Minarcik Jennifer addresses in her 2015 paper that social media concerns on the growth of medical products regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration guides FDA. Jennifer claims that FDA is designed to provide guidance of industry. In addition, laws of FDA require officials to use social media to expand its influence and make it more efficiency. Therefore, new social media platform and tools promote FDA to perform its own responsibility and make information circulate. It's more convenient for public to know details of food or drugs (18- 21).

Jo Robinson, Maria Rodrigues, Steve Fisher, Eleanor Bailey, and Helen Herrmanwrite an article in 2015. They find that social media can be helpful for carrying out suicide prevention activities and more measures is required to be put into effect to make sure that the interventions are delivered in a safe way. The researchers had a 12-week consultation and conducted large number of surveys and researches. They conclude that social media gives people the opportunities to express feelings, ask for help, and provide other people with help. In this way social media has large potential of delivering suicide prevention measures (27).

Jennifer Brandt and Megan K. Feehan write a paper in 2015 arguing that social media can affect the practice of family law in America in many ways. The paper shows a Pew Research Center study which indicates that 71 percent of adult Internet users have been in part of activities on social media networking Web sites. It also shows that while social media can keep us connected with our friends and family, it can also keep us bound to the people whom we don't want to be in touch with. The role of social media in divorce litigation is also mentioned by the researchers where the posts on social media can be used as evidence (5).

In their 2015 paper, Pechrová M., Lohr V., and Havlíček introduce how social media influences the marketing of organic products. The researchers collected the data from the Facebook of the Faculty of Economics and Management of the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague. They find that social media can be very useful for the farmers to market their products but many farmers are not using them because they are not able to use or lack of the experience of using the social media (41).

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this study we research to answer these questions: 1) Do all of the participants think that social media makes their life better? 2) What pros do the participants think social media has? 3) What cons do the participants think social media has?

IV. THE STUDY

1. Participants:

50 people were given the questionnaire during the research. 30 of them are from LNU-MSU and the other 20 are from the outside of the LNU-MSU. 29 of them are female and 21 are male. All of the participants are Chinese except for 2 foreign teachers who are from America. For the people from the outside of the LNU-MSU, most of them occupies different jobs. 6 of them are middle and high school students, 3 people are "white collars" and 4 are security people. Other people include 1 housewife, 4 shopkeepers, and 2 cleaners.

2. Instrumentations:

Our group drafted a piece of questionnaire to research how the participants think about the pros and cons of social media. There are 6 questions in total. Some of them are about how the participants use social media in their life, "Which social media application do you mostly use?" and "Who do you usually contact with social media?" Other questions are about what the participants think about the social media, "Is social media always good for the relationship between you and other people?" and "What pros do you think social media has?" The questionnaires were given to each of the participants and were anonymously finished.

3. Data Collection and Analysis:

The questionnaires were done individually and each participant was asked to answer the questions seriously and honestly. Then the answers were collected and gathered by the group members. We analyzed the answers and showed the data in the charts and tables. The answers of the participants were summarized and divided into groups by their jobs. Their responses about the social media helped us research the pros and cons of social media.

V. RESULTS

Participants' answers were divided into five age groups. Our group members collected data from the five age groups and every option has been collected and shown in the table. In this way, we can see there are many differences among different age groups. To see the differences and the trend of the data more clearly, we also make a chart for the pros of the social media.

Table (1) Pros of social media in different age groups

| Pros of social media | 10 – 20 years old | 21 – 30 years old | 31 – 40 years old | 41 – 50 years old | Over 50 years old |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| a. Contact others | 23 | 7 | 4 | 6 | 2 |
| b. Talk to others if shy | 14 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 0 |
| c. Dating Opportunities | 9 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| d. Find people with same interests | 10 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 0 |
| e. Make new friends | 9 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 0 |
| f. Contact old friends | 20 | 7 | 2 | 4 | 2 |
| g. Contact people who are far away | 22 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| h. Reach customers | 6 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 |
| i. Get news | 20 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 2 |

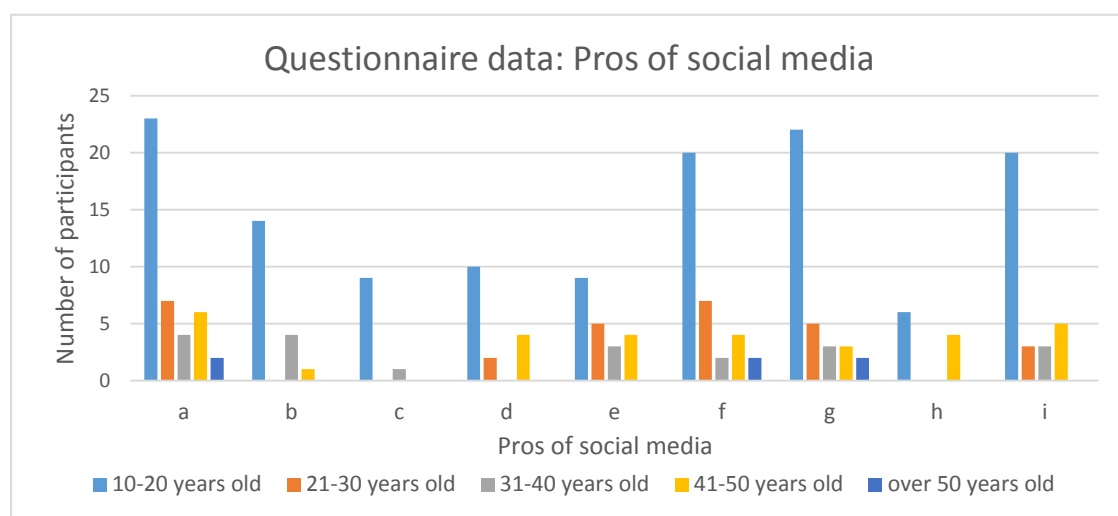


Chart (1) Questionnaire data: Pros of social media

From the chart we find that the pros for the social media in people's using can be different when people have different ages. For most of the participants, social media is used for contacting people. Both old friends and people who are far

away can be contacted through the social media. For many of the participants whose ages are above 30, social media is mostly used for getting news and new information.

The table (2) below shows the cons of the social media in different age groups. The data is also different in every age group. A chart has also been made to show the data more clearly.

Table (2) Cons of social media in different age groups

| Cons of social media | 10 – 20 years old | 21 – 30 years old | 31 – 40 years old | 41 – 50 years old | Over 50 years old |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| a. Personal information leaked | 20 | 5 | 2 | 5 | 1 |
| b. Online crime | 15 | 4 | 1 | 4 | 0 |
| c. People can lie on the social media | 19 | 1 | 3 | 6 | 2 |
| d. Affect your efficiency, distracting | 13 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| e. Less face- to- face communication | 17 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| f. Addiction to social media | 9 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 0 |
| g. Bad effects on relationship | 10 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 1 |

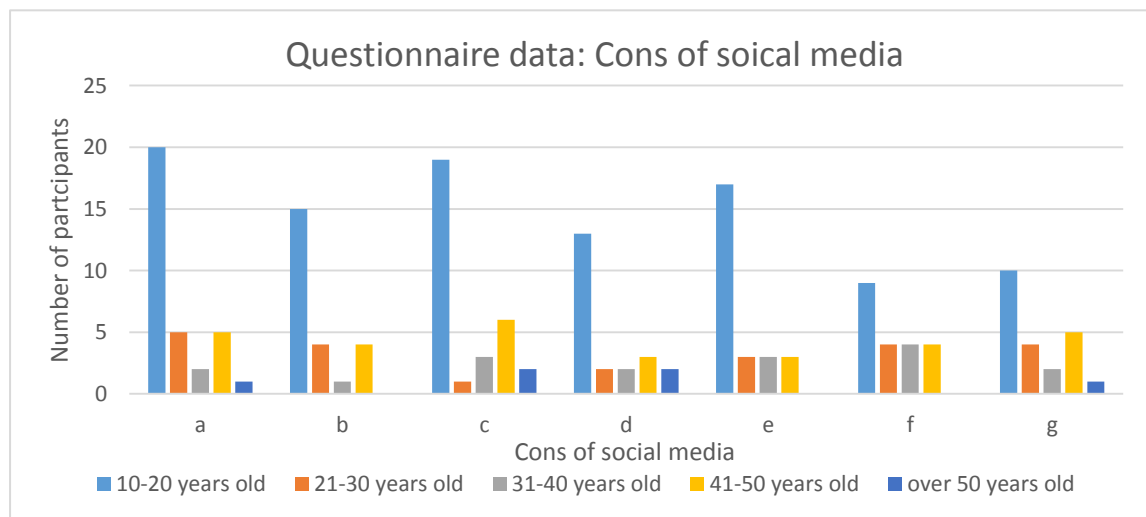


Chart (2) Questionnaire data: Cons of social media

From the chart we can see that most participants have two or more worries about the safety of social media. The worries are also different when different people are using social media. Many young people think that people can lie on the Internet. They are afraid of the false information of the people whom they are talking to through social media. Older people think more about their personal information and the crime that may occur on the Internet. Also they think social media can be detracting and affect their efficiency.

VI. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Through the data and results of the research, our group has revealed some meaningful findings. Most people think that social media has its advantages in making their life better, but it has some disadvantages and can cause trouble as well.

Social media is convenient for people to contact with others. It does not have the limits of time and place. Even if people want to find a person whom they have not been in touch for a long time, people can still find them through social media. Social media uses Internet to narrow the distance between people. No matter how far people are away from others, they can contact people through social media within seconds. World is smaller because of the Internet and social media. Also, social media is a really convenient way for people to receive news and information. News and information can be pushed to the device that people use in their daily life, and in this way it can be convenient for people to get news and information.

With the development of Internet technology, more crimes can be done online and more and more people are worried about the safety of social media. Among the participants, young people whose ages are between 10 and 20 don't trust

whom they talk to through social media. When talking online, people can hide or fake their identities and personal information. It is possible that some people are using this to lie to other people online. Among the middle age participants, most of whom occupies jobs, they mostly worry about the leak of their personal information. Hackers nowadays can easily get other people's information through social media. If the information is related to the job, it will not only hurt the people who has it but also hurt the company. People work in the office also have a kind of distraction problem. One business man and one bank staff from the participants claim that they can be distracted by the notification that is pushed by the social media when they are trying to focus work. Many people have been addicted to the social media leading to the fact that they can't help to check the social media several times in an hour.

Many findings can be seen from the two charts our group has made. About pros, all of five groups think that social media is easy to contact with others. Also, many of these groups do not think that social media is easy to reach customers when doing business. However, there are still many differences among each groups. Over 50 percent of the first age group think people who are shy can use social media to talk with others. On the contrary, most participants in other groups don't believe that this is an expression of social media's pros. Next, although some of 10-20, 21-30 and 41-50 years old group argue that social media can help people find someone with same interests, 31-40 and over 50 years old groups still don't think that social media has this character. Last but not least, unlike other age groups, the youngest group suggest that social media is convenient for them to have date opportunities.

As for cons, most of the participants in five groups believe that personal information can be leaked by social media. Similarly, most of them believe they cannot be addicted to social media. On the other hand, unlike other age groups, 31-40 and over 50 years old group don't think online crime can be a con of social media. In contrast to other groups, over 50 years old group argue that it is impossible for them to have less face-to-face communication with others.

In the literature review part, we have discussed the paper written by Kristie and the paper written by David. Both of them talked about how they use social media to connect their business with their customers. They use social media to gain some feedback from their customers (VanAuken 109). The business man from our participants also mentioned that the using of social media in his company. He uses social media as a platform of advertising the production of his company. Social media is an easy way for him and his company to put their new products to the customers.

In their 2015 paper, Pechrová M., Lohr V., and Havlíček talk about the using of social media in the market of organic products. In the paper they mention that many farmers are using social media to get information of the products and the news of the market (41). In our research, many participants claim to get news and new information through social media. They either get information from their work or get information of the news that they are interested in. Those information can also be used to promote products or receive certain information of a product. All of those reasons make social media a very convenient tool for people in their life.

Social media is becoming the main tool for people to contact with others. Social media has different pros for different kinds of people. In our opinion, young people should focus on making new friends, finding someone with same interests and searching for date opportunities. Different from them, older adults may prefer to contact with old friends or someone who are far away. Also, we think that businessmen may use it to reach business customers. Although social media makes our life convenient and fortune, there are still many cons of it. The most terrible con which people think is about personal information. Once someone steals our account number, he or she may copy our personal information and use them to commit a crime. Using social media, many young participants can become inefficient. Especially after a long - time chatting, it must affect teenagers' health. Furthermore, they may even get addicted into them. For old adults, because of their social activities becoming less, they may face less face-to-face communication. Our group believe that they would rather holding friends' hands than watching phone's screen.

In our research, we mainly focus on how the use of social media is different when different people of different ages are using it. But during the research, we found that the use of social media has many differences between different people who have different jobs. Due to the limitation of the ability of our group members, we could not get many participants' opinion who occupy different jobs. So our groups suggest that the future research of this subject should interview people from different aspects. The researchers should consider as many aspects as possible about how people think about the pros and cons of social media. People who occupy different jobs, have different families, and who are from different social background should be interviewed for this research. In this way, the research of the pros and cons of social media on people can be more objective and comprehensive.

REFERENCES

- [1] Abbott, Jason. "Analyzing the social-political impact of the internet and new social media in East Asia." *Third World Quarterly* (2012): 333-357. JSTOR. Web. 7 May 2015.
- [2] Andrew T. Stephen, Jeff Galak. "Journal of Marketing Research." *The Effects of Traditional and Social Earned Media on Sales: A Study of a Microlending Marketplace* (2012): 624 - 639. JSTOR. Web. 7 May 2015.
- [3] BRANDT, JENNIFER, and MEGAN K. FEEHAN. "Social Media Influences On The Practice Of Family Law." *American Journal Of Family Law* 29.1 (2015): 5-8. Academic Search Complete. Web. 5 May 2015.
- [4] Emerson, R. M. "Social Exchange Theory." *Annual Review of Sociology* Vol. 11, No. 2 (2003): 335-362. Academic Search Complete. Web. 5 May 2015.
- [5] Jennifer, Minarcik. "AMWA Journal: American Medical Writers Association Journal." *The FDA and Social Media: A Year in Review* (2015): 18- 21. Academic Search Complete. Web. 7 May 2015.
- [6] Kaplan, Andreas, M. Heinlein, Michael (2010). "Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media." *Business horizons*, v. 53, n. 1, 59-68. Academic Search Complete. Web. 7 May 2015.
- [7] King, David Lee. "Why Use Social Media?" *Library Technology Reports* 51.1 (2015): 6-9. Academic Search Complete. Web. 7 May 2015.
- [8] Pechrová, M., V. Lohr, and Z. Havlíček. "Social Media for Organic Products Promotion." *Agris On-Line Papers In Economics & Informatics* 7.1 (2015): 41-50. Academic Search Complete. Web. 7 May 2015.
- [9] ROBINSON, Jo, et al. "Social Media And Suicide Prevention: Findings From A Stakeholder Survey." *Shanghai Archives Of Psychiatry* 27.1 (2015): 27-35. Academic Search Complete. Web. 7 May 2015.
- [10] VanAuken, Kristie. "Using Social Media To Improve Customer Engagement And Promote Products And Services." *Journal Of Airport Management* 9.2 (2015): 109-117. Academic Search Complete. Web. 5 May 2015.
- [11] Young Scott W. H, Rossmann Doralyn. "Building Library Community Through Social Media." *Information Technology & Libraries* (2015): 20- 37. Web. 7 May 2015.