

THE ADOLESCENT-PROSUMER ON FACEBOOK - Drawing a Portrait –

Claudia Chiorean, PhD, Research Assistant, "Babeş-Bolyai" University of Cluj-Napoca

Abstract: Teenagers spend about half of their free time during a day using various kinds of mass communication, especially the new media: Facebook. The teenager's portrait on Facebook is varied, complex like it is in real life. In real life, the teenager knows reality through experience, through education, by means of the family, the school and the society. In the new virtual area towards which we are moving quickly, the Internet (Facebook) is a great source of information and training of adolescent equally with family, school, society. But like any human product, Facebook's virtual world has its advantages and disadvantages, pluses and minuses. The mind's product can have, under the specific conditions, positive effects and negative effects. Sometimes enthusiastically using Facebook it can ignore the negative effects. They exist and manifest to all (children, adolescents, young or old). The field of research is relatively new. The rapid evolution of the Internet and widespread, do the research to be difficult. But not impossible.

Keywords: teenager, prosumer, facebook, beliefs, behavior.

When trying to define the individuality of today's teenager, the new media inevitably comes to mind. The sketch of the teen's image on Facebook can begin with a few quotations: "In fact, we believe only what we like" (Blaise Pascal, "De l'esprit géométrique et de l'art de persuader"); "To break into someone's mind to form an opinion/to induce a behavior is an act of manipulation. Psychological violence (especially cognitive) owes its entire efficacy to dissimulation" (Breton, Philippe, "Manipulation of words"). "Populus vult decipi, decipiatus.", meaning: People want to be deceived, so let them be deceived (Carlo Caraff, cardinal of Pope Paul the 4th).

The new man may be aligned to older or newer existential mythology. The human being that, subject to change, accepts change and adapts his behavior to the purpose of renewal belongs to the category of "the new man". But the integral vision on the concept was initially given by Christianity. Throughout human history, it was taken up and elaborated by philosophers, scientists, artists, poets, writers, psychologists, sociologists, politicians and today by social networks. Today the concept is unable to assert a clear, final, referential meaning because the new means of mass communication have an explosive growth rate. The new means of mass communication outrun the research concerning their effects on receptors. The continuous evolution of new media makes it even more difficult researching the impact on users.

New media circumscribe in its semantic area not only blogs, podcasts, video games, virtual worlds, wikis encyclopedias, but also any other wireless device, interactive television and even the sites and email. All these new (for 2005-2010 years) media coexist through the phenomenon of convergence. The convergence of new media is made for dissemination and reception of the same message across multiple media platforms (through multiple vehicles) from a universal storage, digital message.

Social network or socialization network

The social network is a social structure made up of people with common goals (network of students, politicians, thieves), in contrast to technical networks (Telephony network). Social networks for common users are called "social networking" by sociologists. In recent years through a social network means a (Information) network of Internet users based on certain websites where users can register and can interact with others which are already enrolled. These social networks are part of a relatively new global phenomenon called Web 2.0. The members of a social network are linked together informally, without obligations, actively contributing to the collection and dissemination of information across the globe via the web.

A social network can lead to socialization when the social relationships of the community's members are complex, varied and deep. The socialized individual is integrated into the community that belongs. The interaction of members is direct, unmediated, based on enduring relationships. For example, the communication get to be the communion. This is difficult to achieve for the social networking.

The most popular web networks are: Facebook – approximately 750 million Facebook members (September 2011) worldwide, FeteBaieti.com - 1 million in Romania, Romanian social network; Flickr; global network for image and photo information; LinkedIn - for career management and professional relationships; Lokalisten - 2.8 million in Germany; Myspace - about 220 million users worldwide (March 2009); SchülerVZ + StudiVZ + meinVZ - over 13.1 million students - in German (VZ is short for Verzeichnis = catalog, index); StayFriends - over 7.5 mil, Twitter about 20 to 25 million members (July 2009) - for rapid spread in the masses of textual news short - kennt-wen-wer - 5.5 million in Germany (translation : who knows whom); YouTube - the video clip information, Second Life - a game become social network¹.

Facebook – history

Initially created at Harvard, U.S.A, it was a social network which was used only by the students of this University. Later it was extended to the students of other American universities. Mark Zuckerberg, who was a student at Harvard in 2004, improved the network in order to contact close friends, but also persons who were unknown. In May 2007 Facebook initiated a platform which interferes with the other web pages. A few months later a new application against spam messages was initiated. Facebook iPhone was initiated in August 2007.

In Romania Facebook had: 0.5 million users in January 2010; 2.4 million users in January 2011, over 3.7 million users in September 2011; 5,593,480 users in January 2013 (according to Facebrands.ro and Facebrand PRO). “This morning (8th of October) there are over a milliard of people who use Facebook” Mark Zuckerberg announced, according to CNN.

Features

¹www. ziare.com, 16 octombrie 2012.

The registered users can find their friends as well as any other users from all over the world, not only from the county they belong to.

The users can create and modify their own profile any time they want. The public profiles can be blocked by other users, but the personal profile can not. According to the data provided by the ComScore Company, Facebook receives most of its visitors from Google, Microsoft, and in a lesser degree through Yahoo.

One of the most important and frequent features of this social network is represented by the possibility to post photographs. Also, the users can enjoy various on-line games.

The functions from the classical means of communication are found in the digital communication, as well: the informing function, the explaining/analysing/opinion....function, the socialising function (contacting friends/making friends), educational-cultural function (the opportunity to develop creativity by changing your own profile, the possibility of posting photos, videos, podcastings, on-line games, etc), entertainment/ identification/ psychotherapeutic function, advertising function. Still, the most important one is the entertainment function.

Among the on-line philosophical principles (the charity principle, the principle of respecting others' dignity – the human being represents the supreme and the most important being of the natural world-; the principle of solidarity, the principle of equality, the principle of integrity), the principle of vulnerability is the most wide-spread.

In order to analyse the Facebook pages the following things have been taken into consideration: the content, the richness of the information, the number of friends, the frequency of postings, interactivity.

Connected to entertainment and vulnerability, there is a developing world: the world of teenagers.

Teenagers

This age is one of torment, when a major intellectual development takes place, when one is looking for the meaning of life, of the Universe, several concepts are outlined according to a personal linguistics, personalized connections between things are established.

It is the time when the teenager develops a system of values, expresses the strong need of love and affection, of acceptance and a need for his own identity to be recognized. The transition from the pre-adolescent child to the mature person is full of contradictory attitudes. It is the most difficult period of a person's life, defined by the need to escape from any kind of authority.

Teenagers on Facebook

According to statistics, more than half the teenagers between 13 and 17 years old spend more than 30 hours a week on the computer, console or eBook. Male users of the social networks mainly use self-description in order to promote their intelligence, while women use as main "weapon" photos as a way to promote the physical side and the power of attraction. Young people's interest in online revolve around the following themes: sexuality, identity.

The informed teenager

Thanks to Facebook, teenagers can get information quickly from several sources at once, with a low cost in an attractive manner. Regarding the veracity of the information from the net, the coverage of the subject, the efficiency of the acquired knowledge one should manifest at least minimal care. The volume of information that the teenager can access is huge, unlimited. Social networks influence the judgment/ thinking/ improve memory, cultivate creativity, increase visual literacy skills.

But the capacity of the human brain to store the information in a cognitive system accessed in a few seconds, minutes, even hours, is limited. In the long run, the information obtained cannot be integrated in the existing knowledge system. Pieces of information that remain, decontextualized, can create erroneous cognitive milestones, distorted value systems and can lead to invalid information.

Regarding the degree of truth (universally valid according to the classical view) a piece of information should be checked from multiple sources. The Internet does not have patience with this process. The mistakes that appear unintentionally – the omissions, the inaccuracies, the errors of wording or the grammar ones- can become rules. For the uninitiated, for those who have not collected information from other sources too (books, for example), the informational world of the Internet may become another self-sufficient world, but quite far from reality.

The teenager integrated in communities

The Facebook phenomenon, due to its magnitude, influenced the manner, the time and the quality of social relations. Due to this socializing network, one can invite a variety of people to various events, in the shortest time possible.

Thus, by using socializing networks, teenagers keep in touch with old friends, they can find new friends, they have the opportunity to participate in the life of online communities that are close by or from all over the world. This membership has positive effects on the (virtual!) social life, develops language (a certain type of language!), helps overcome emotional inhibitions. Networking can create a sense of confidence in their own performance, induces more self-esteem than a mirror.

But, on an emotional level, one feels unable to feel empathy, a lack of normal emotional reactions, envy, low enthusiasm for life, narcissism, a need for continuous feedback, low self-esteem, fear, violence, intolerance. Related to behavior, we can say that difficulties in interacting socially appear because of the changed perspective on online identity and on social relations, and also a lack of self-control, body language depleted a decrease in reaction speed.

Romantic relationships have also been affected by this social network. The way one announces a relationship or lack of it is just the beginning. A study performed by a group of psychologists from the University of Guelph, Canada, has shown a strong link between the use of Facebook and jealousy or suspicion growing among adolescent couples (and not only). Jealousy within a couple, which occurs because of all the information obtained using this method, led to the end of many relationships between young people in recent years.

There are many different factors that lead to the occurrence of these negative feelings. Photos, accepting new friends, comments from users, statements made by people about their

emotional state, are among other things, elements that can cause a relationship to be affected. Facebook gives the partner access to information to which he would not otherwise have access.

Every culture has its own ways to start, develop and conclude a relationship. However, in recent years, these protocols have been modified and, to some extent homogenized, because of a more active participation of technology in all the aspects of everybody's sentimental life. The main feature of a Facebook-style love affair is that decisions about starting or ending a relationship are communicated to all interested (or uninterested) people via the social network.

The utilitarian aspects of being a member Facebook can be seen when the teenagers can find jobs easier/ employers submit their offers/ gifts can be offered/ products can be advertised/ you can shop on-line and food ordered on the internet gains ground through advertising. Social networks such as Facebook may help find criminals (Deutsche Welle), find missing persons and save lives.

The Teenager trained on the net

For example, in order to acquire handwriting, a child from the 1st grade needs exercise and a rather large physical and mental effort for the period of the development of these skills. In order to be able to write on the computer, the effort one makes is much smaller, both physically and mentally.

In 45 of the 50 U.S. states, students do not learn handwriting. Two researchers from the CNRS (note - the National Centre for Scientific Research in France) discovered that there is a close connection between reading the letters and writing them. They formed two groups of students, some handwriting letters, others typing them to the computer.

The students and other people were then shown the letters and they were asked if they were the ones that had written. Those who had written by hand have recognized them more quickly and accurately than those who had typed them. This does not necessarily mean that writing on the computer from the start leads to dyslexia. But it creates difficulty in reading that is not to be neglected.

Those who had hand-written them, recognised them a lot faster and accurately than those who had typed them. This does not necessarily mean that typing leads to dyslexia. But the difficulty it creates when it comes to reading is not neglectable.

The teenage consuming entertainment on line

Online 3D entertainment is highly appreciated. Games like *Second Life* have drawn a lot of attention and came to being perceived like “a virtual world shaped and created by its residents”. *Second Life* is a diverse universe in which you can encounter people from all over the real world. It's a world; it's a virtual society which tends to conveniently replace the reality.

The virtual world of *Second Life* was launched on the 23rd of June 2003 and was created by the American company Linden Lab. They let you download the application with the same name of *Second Life* online for free. The first and the most important condition of

Linden Lab (LL) is to be at least 18 years old, because of the contents of the game. For the persons under 18 years old, LL have created a version called *Teen Second Life*.

In August 2007, they have created a service called *Second Life Voice* and offered the possibility of listening to the others. So 2007 was a revolutionary year for *Second Life*. It's in 2007 and with services like “voice” and “sculpted prims” that it reached its peak in terms on popularity and extended unlimitedly the possibilities of creation².

Like in the real life, the first impact is the physical one. The users pay tens of dollars to buy sophisticated clothing that will ensure their social success. A successful debut in *Second Life* can be made with a pleasant attitude that draws the attention and a lot of interesting friends. Here you can really find your true love, because you can easily adapt and stand up the standards imposed by society.

Under these circumstances, real life divorces, caused by affairs in *Second Life* are difficult to annihilate. Psychologists warn that one of the major and real dangers of this addictive imaginary *Second Life* in which everything is possible is that the users may lose their capacity of distinguishing between their real and the virtual life. There are a lot of residents that got to spending half of their day in *Second Life* because for several reasons that is the only place in which they can put forward they qualities and potential.

Second Life has an economy of its own and even its own currency – linden dollar (L\$), which in its turn has a value in real life – 1 USD equals 250 L\$. You can covert real money to virtual money and vice versa. This is because in *Second Life* transactions are as fast and numerous as the ones in real life.

Second Life has enriched a lot of people. The most well-known example is the one of the avatar Anshe Chung, who developed a real estate business in the virtual world and became the first millionaire of *Second Life*. Business means creativity. They buy a lot of shoes, clothing and accessories for the avatars. All these are created by talented personalities that become icons just like in the real life.

In *Second Life* like in reality, performance means a lot of work, dedication and, of course, a good marketing strategy. The avatars that are making real money in *Second Life* work as much as a person does in normal life.

If a user feels his rights have not been respected, he can make a complaint to Linden Lab and the attacker can be excluded. The VIPs come a go in *Second Life*. Bruce Willis has met his *Second Life* fans and Joan Osborne has organised a concert. They have even built Roman-Catholic churches, Buddhist temples and mosques.

World of Warcraft (Wow) is a *Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing game (MMORPG)* created by Blizzard Entertainment. It's the four game from the Warcraft series, if we exclude the expansion packs and Warcraft Adventures : Lord of the Clans. The Warcraft games are situated in an universe named Warcraft, a fantastic world created by Warcraft, Orcs and Humans in 1994. World of Warcraft is situated in Azeroth, four years after the events from Warcraft III: The Frozen Throne. Once the expansion pack called The Burning Crusade was released, Outland could be explored. World of Warcraft has celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Warcraft universe.

²<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DhrgbRugmTA&NR=1&feature=endscreen>, 6 octombrie 2012.

Even though the release of the game was slowed down by stability and performance issues, Warcraft has rapidly become the most popular MMORPG based on monthly payment. In 2008 Blizzard Entertainment has announced that the number of the active users paying daily to play has reached 11.5 millions. Like in most RPGs, players control a character they created and have the chance to explore, accomplish missions (quests) assigned to them by NPCs (Non-playable characters) by killing monsters.

The low and medium monsters and quests can usually be conquered without the help of other players, especially if the player's level of knowledge and skill is better than that of his enemies. Other parts of the game, like the dungeons, are created with a cooperation purpose in mind, so that more players unite and cooperate in order to finish the respective dungeon. In most cases, the easier ones require a team of 5 players at most so that the raid can be completed; the last ones, however, need up to 25 or even 40 players. The hardest of quests can take up to several months and a lot of effort to complete. Usually, the areas specifically designed for level 85 characters are more dependent on raids (and take up more time) than the advance of the character from level 1 to level 85.

Due to the fact that level 80 is the limit (this limit was raised to 85 with the launch of the "Cataclysm" expansion in 2010), the objectives of the players change when reaching that level. They usually start focusing on acquiring better equipment for their characters in order to increase their power. With only a few exceptions, these pieces of equipment are obtained either through PvP (Player vs Player fights) or through PvE, which is the long-term battle during the hardest raids. The big dungeons require up to a few hours in order to be completed. Because the monsters from those dungeons showcase an enormous power, the characters are wearing an armour that protects them against the elements of the monsters. Statistics shows that there are over 10.000 Romanian players of WOW that are officially registered on the WOW servers. (http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_of_Warcraft)

Candy Crash Saga, the best-known Facebook game, can be played online even without access to Facebook. The essence of the game consists of matching at least three candies of the same type. The difficult part starts when this game begins to be addictive, transforming the players into addicts.

Criminal Case is one of the most controversial games on Facebook, which can be played online at the moment even without a Facebook account. The action of the game consists of creating situations in which more and more people are destroyed. If the player manages to fulfil the most dangerous, spectacular, almost impossible missions, he scores the highest number of points. Although this game focuses on sharpening the players' mental reactions, the more human feelings like mercy, solidarity, and need to help are dismissed because they do not fit in the context.

The adolescent that is educated on Facebook

The power of the rolemodel is acknowledged in every educational system that exists out there. The most successful models are considered to be those from the tabloids, from the VIP or the Life Style sections. The values are reversed. The critical system and our discernment are broken.

The adolescent that is exposed to the dangers on Facebook

One very pertinent problem that arises from the use of Facebook is the intrusion in other people's personal lives. Starting from its creation, Facebook has become a target for the complaints regarding the respect for privacy. The biggest complaints formulated are connected to the ease with which anyone can access private information belonging to the members of the network. The users can connect from any part of the world that grants internet access with the help of a password that is established once the user completes an application form that presents many personal questions. This is the reason why 30.000 users gave up their account in one day, considering that there are too many security and confidentiality issues.

Each user can determine how much of the personal information he exposes on the network gets to be shared with other users. Starting from here, an informed user can choose his own level of confidentiality according to his preferences. However, a less informed user may fall prey to risks like unwittingly exposing personal information or trespassing into the personal area through photos, videos, comments etc. Within the network one can also find groups of users who act against the violation of their intimacy (for example, „Damn, Facebook, Stop Stalking Me Group” sau „STOP! Do not get into my private life. No personal questions!! Group”).

The Facebook regulations manual indicates that the network can and may gather information about its users from outside sources as well, sources like newspapers, blogs or any other sources from the internet. This information is used for the constant improvement of the database and for allowing its paying customers access to the users' behaviour, so that they have a better chance at targeting their commercials according to preferences and dislikes. Thanks to the information gathered by Facebook, third-party sites may use it to send targeted commercials according to the profile of the user. These commercials may take into consideration the gender, the studies, the political opinions, religion, and jobs of the user.

The addicted adolescent

In the 2.0 era, internet addiction is a real disease. It even has a name. It is called „Internet Addiction Disorder” (IAD) and, starting with 2012, it was officially recognized as a mental disorder. Basically, the biggest fears of the people affected by this disorder are not finding a charger, not being able to check their e-mail account, seeing a blue screen or seeing the display „No Internet Connection Found”.

The signs signalling this addiction (as emphasized by Dr. Cecilie Schou Andreassen, from the University of Bergen, Norway) are:

1. You spend too much time thinking about Facebook or about the fact that you want to get on Facebook.
2. You feel an increasing need to use Facebook.
3. You go on Facebook in order to forget about personal problems.
4. You tried to give up Facebook, but you did not succeed.
5. You become restless if, for some reason, you cannot access your account.
6. You spend so much time on Facebook that your performance on the job or your studies become affected.

All those who are spending too much time on the Internet are said to be exposed to the risk of cerebral imbalance as the brain's left hemisphere develops disproportionately compared to the right hemisphere. The brain's left hemisphere is known as the "digital" part, responsible for arithmetics, numbers, language and categories. On the other hand, the right hemisphere, the one that is less engaged while being on the Internet, is the "analogical" part, the one corresponding to intuitions, colors, forms, metaphors and emotions.

Roland Jouvent, the author of *The Magus Brain*, writes: "Empathy develops in the emotional brain. By overly developing the digital intelligence, one can be at a high risk of autism." Not Alzheimer's, of course, or dementia, but addiction. "The Internet activates the same parts of the brain as drugs do," claims a specialist in addictology at the Bichat Hospital in Paris. The addicts become, in time, incapable of affection, compassion, feelings in general.

The outcomes of Internet addiction are many and almost with no exceptions negative, especially when occurring during the formative years of a child or young adult. A specialist in cognitive psychology gives the following example: "A mother shows her 1-year old a doll. She unzips the doll's belly pocket and reveals to her toddler a little bell. Very soon, the toddler will learn to find the little bell by himself or herself. However, if the toddler sees the same procedure on video, he or she will not attempt to imitate it. What determines the intellectual development of a child is the number of words he or she hears before turning 3. If the child hears the words on TV, he or she will learn only half of them! And a tablet is, 9 times out of 10, a pocket-size TV.

The adolescent hindered by the Internet

A case study published by Huffington Post and done on 802 adolescents aged between 12 and 17, reveals that the teenagers' enthusiasm for Facebook has started to die out. Facebook has become a "social burden." It has started to be invaded by parents, it fuels true "social dramas" and it leads people to overshare personal information. The reason adolescents have not abandoned Facebook yet is that they do not want to miss out on their friends' gossip; however, they have been steadily migrating to Twitter and Instagram, which they consider to be a space free of their parents and where they can express themselves better.

The abused/abusing adolescent on the Internet

The cases of violence on Facebook are both verbal and visual. A case study called *Adolescents: Delicacy and Cruelty at the Social Network Level* evaluated 799 adolescents aged between 14 and 18. The results show that fifteen percent of them had been at least once the victim of an online assault, either on Facebook or on Twitter. Twenty-one percent admitted having been the aggressor.

A real-life consequence of communicating on Facebook

A teenager from Texas has been serving in prison since February after having posted an inadequate comment on Facebook. Justin carter was 18 when he engaged in an online argument with another user of an online game they were both playing and posted a comment he has regretted ever since. Daily Mail reproduces the boy's comment: "I'll get in a school full of kids, I'll shoot all of them and I'll eat their hearts while still beating. Unfortunately for him, his public threat came 2 months after the terrible massacre at Sandy Hook, where

another teenager had shot 20 children and teachers, setting an entire country on fire. Justin's dad testifies that his son did not use to watch TV so he was not aware of what had taken place. As a result, he was not aware of how much his comment would cost him. After seeing the comment on Facebook, several people from Justin's list of friends alerted the police who ended up arresting Justin. If found guilty of terrorist threat, he risks being sentenced for up to eight years.

The next-generation Facebook

Facebook has been testing a new product on the American market which would require users to pay to have their status updates show up on other people's newsfeed. These statuses will benefit from priority placement on the newsfeed page and the company has been working on an algorithm that would determine which statuses would appear first. This marketing technique is meant to change the users' attitude toward Facebook for the better. The price was set to \$7 in the US. The service had been tested prior to this in New Zealand in May, then in 20 other countries for prices varying between \$1 and \$12. (<http://www.ziare.com/facebook/utilizatori/facebook-contra-cost-utilizatorii-obisnuiti-vor-plati-pentru-promovarea-statusului-1193856>).

Conclusion

The teenager's portrait on Facebook is varied, complex like it is in real life. In real life, the teenager knows reality through experience, through education, by means of the family, the school and the society. In the new virtual area towards which we are moving quickly, the Internet (facebook site, in particular) is a great source of information and training of adolescent equally with family, school, society. But like any human product, Facebook's virtual world has its advantages and disadvantages, pluses and minuses. The mind's product can have, under the specific conditions, positive effects and negative effects. Sometimes enthusiastically using facebook it can ignore the negative effects. They exist and manifest to all (children, adolescents, young or old). The field of research is relatively new. The rapid evolution of the Internet and widespread, do the research to be difficult. But not impossible.

Bibliografie

- Aggarwal, Charu C. (ed.), 2011, *Social Network Data Analytics*, New York, Dordrecht, Heidelberg, London, Springer
- Castells, Manuel, 2011, *The rise of the network society: the information age: economy, society and culture Vol. 1*, Chichester, Wiley Blackwell
- Papacharissi, Zizi (ed.), 2011, *A networked self. Identity, community, and culture on social network sites*, New York, London, Routledge
- Russell, Matthew A., 2011, *Mining the social web. Analyzing data from Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and other social media sites*, Beijing, Cambridge, Farnham, Koln, Sebastopol, Tokyo, O'Reilly
- Muresan, Mihaela, *Writing style for new journalism. Storytelling and narrative media content*, Editura Accent, Cluj-Napoca, 2010.