Facebook metaverse and beyond

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Agenda

- Facebook company is called Meta now, what will change besides its name?
- Virtual reality – from Second Life to Metaverse
- History of social media: what was good, what went wrong?
- Metaverse – good idea or just a marketing trick?
- Connectedness, Social bubbles & Fake news
## Number of users

### Most popular social networks worldwide as of October 2021, ranked by number of active users (in millions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Network</th>
<th>Number of Active Users (in millions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>2,895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YouTube</td>
<td>2,291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WhatsApp*</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>1,393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook Messenger*</td>
<td>1,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weixin / WeChat</td>
<td>1,251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TikTok</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Douyin**</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QQ</td>
<td>591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sina Weibo</td>
<td>566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telegram</td>
<td>550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snapchat</td>
<td>538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KuaiShou</td>
<td>506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinterest</td>
<td>454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reddit*</td>
<td>430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quora*</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Sources

- We Are Social; Various sources (Company data); Hootsuite; DataReportal; Kepios; October 2021: social networks and messenger/chat apps
- © Statista 2021

### Additional information:

- TikTok does not include Douyin
By region

Percentage of total monthly active Facebook users, by region

Note: Data is quarterly
Source: Facebook
• Facebook revenues 2020 - 85 billion USD (GDP of Bulgaria 71, Luxembourg 73, Slovakia 110)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Platform</th>
<th>Average Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>33 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TikTok</td>
<td>32 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>31 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>29 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snapchat</td>
<td>28 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: eMarketer*
Wrong trend

• The average user in the US spent 39 minutes on Facebook in 2017. This fell to 36 minutes in 2018 and 33 minutes in 2019 before rising again slightly to 35 minutes in 2020.

• At 32 minutes a day, the platform on which US social media users spend the second most amount of time is TikTok. This is very impressive since it was only launched in the US in 2017.
Virtual Reality should be the answer...
Virtual reality – from Second Life to Metaverse

• Virtual reality as a next big thing?
  – Minecraft
  – PokemonGo
  – Google Glass (*2013),
  – 3D games – GTA, Fortnite, CounterStrike
  – Horizon Words – just opened for US & Canada
    • https://youtu.be/02kCEurWkqU
The Facebook files

- In 2021, the American Wall Street Journal published a series of 16 investigative articles collectively entitled "The Facebook Files" / Facebook Papers.
- It is an exhibition based on thousands of documents, presentations and internal communication within Facebook, which provide unprecedented insight into the functioning of the Internet giant.
Source - Whistleblower

It gives an insight into Facebook's decision-making processes, the opinions of employees, managers and senior management. The results of internal research, future plans and employees' concerns about problems. Fascinating reading that does not shed a good light on FCB and Instagram.
That means, for a select few members of our community, we are not enforcing our policies and standards. Unlike the rest of our community, these people can violate our standards without any consequences.
Při založení účtu souhlasíte s Podmínky používání služby, které nikdo z vás nečetl.

– Zásady komunity
– Zjišťování případů porušení
– Pravidla a postihy
The first ethical issue - moderation

- Salary $15 per hour
- Psychologically demanding work
- Language barriers
- Bad training
- Unclear / unfair reasons for deleting content

Mark Zuckerberg has publicly said Facebook Inc. allows its more than three billion users to speak on equal footing with the elites of politics, culture and journalism, and that its standards of behavior apply to everyone, no matter their status or fame.
Facebook Researchers Found Its ‘Political Whitelist’ Influenced Misinformation Spread

By Alex Heath | Nov. 24, 2020 10:30 AM PST

Photo: Nick Clegg, Facebook’s VP of Global Affairs and Communications. Photo: AP.
Facebook bans academics who researched ad transparency and misinformation on Facebook

The researchers say their work is being silenced

By James Vincent  |  Aug 4, 2021, 7:08am EDT
Facebook Banned Me for Life Because I Help People Use It Less

BY LOUIS BARCLAY  OCT 07, 2021 • 9:38 AM
Facebook bans scenic canal over ‘obscene’ name, dubs it ‘hate speech’

By Ben Cost

September 16, 2021 | 2:38pm | Updated
The rules do not apply to everyone

- Cross Check - Xcheck creates an uncontrolled elite for which the rules do not apply
- Prominent users without penalty or with a long response time.
- It is said to be "exceptionally used" - 5.8 million
Ovesight board
Who is on whitelist?

- Athletes, comedians, undead, politicians, celebrities, fashion designers, Dough the Pug
- Those who have a great reach, attention
- They usually have no idea

Most Facebook employees were able to add users into the XCheck system, the documents say, and a 2019 audit found that at least 45 teams around the company were involved in whitelisting. Users aren’t generally told that they have been tagged for special treatment. An internal guide to XCheck eligibility cites qualifications including being “newsworthy,” “influential or popular” or “PR risky.”
Influence on youth

- Tik Tok - the main feature is the performance, show, performance
- SnapChat - face and filters that modify it
- Instagram - whole body and lifestyle
  - Very competitive environment
  - Exaggerated expectations - a culture of unattainable perfection
  - Fear of missing out
  - Dependent created - they can't stop using it
• Facebook has known about this for a long time, they are researching it (N = 50,000+, 5 surveys a year and a half), but it does not solve it…

Facebook Knows Instagram Is Toxic for Teen Girls, Company Documents Show

Its own in-depth research shows a significant teen mental-health issue that Facebook plays down in public
Why? Frequent social comparison is a key driver of subjective well-being and teens say IG makes this problem worse.

66% of teen girls on IG experience negative social comparison (compared to 40% of teen boys)

52% Of teen girls who experienced negative social comparison on Instagram, said it was caused by images related to beauty

32% of teen girls said that when they felt bad about their bodies, Instagram made them feel worse
Comparisons on Instagram can change how young women view and describe themselves.

**THE ME IN REAL LIFE**

**MULTI-DIMENSIONAL**
- Dynamic shape
- Unique
- Colorful

**HIGH**
- Raised up
- High esteem
- Confident

**CENTERED**
- Stability, animals, nature
- Slide, ladder
- People

**THE ME ON INSTAGRAM**

**ONE-DIMENSIONAL**
- Boxed in (small box)
- Not in control
- Dark

**LOW**
- Alone
- Pulled down
- Low esteem

**CHAINED TO THOUGHTS**
- Rabbit hole
- Anxious
- Overthinking
Teens blame Instagram for increases in the rates of anxiety and depression among teens

- This reaction was unprompted and consistent across all groups
- Constant comparison on Instagram is “the reason” why there are higher levels of anxiety and depression in young people
- Social comparison and perfectionism are nothing new, but young people are dealing with this on an unprecedented scale.
- The proliferation of new and different ways to compare themselves to others, combined with constant access to means that there is no way to escape social comparison on IG.
- For both boys and girls, this was called out as being the number one reason why IG is worse than other platforms for mental health. And, young people openly attribute their increased level of anxiety and depression to Instagram.

“The reason why our generation is so messed up and has higher anxiety and depression than our parents is because we have to deal with social media. Everyone feels like they have to be perfect.”
- UK Female
One in five teens say that Instagram makes them feel worse about themselves, with UK girls the most negative.

Q: In general, how has Instagram affected [the way you feel about yourself/your mental health]?

There were no statistically significant differences among those who answered for "the way you feel about yourself" and those who answered for "your mental health."

\( X^2 = 1.32, \text{df} = 1, p = 0.25 \)
Consequences of toxicity

- Constant pressure
- Depression
- Eating disorders
- Self-harm
- Suicidal thoughts
- And targeting even younger and younger users / Paper 6 /

“The research that we’ve seen is that using social apps to connect with other people can have positive mental-health benefits,” CEO Mark Zuckerberg said at a congressional hearing in March 2021 when asked about children and mental health.
ALGORITHM is to blame

• The way content is recommended creates a dependency
• 2006 - NewsFeed introduced
• 2011 - contributions from friends, sites and followers are no longer automatically displayed chronologically - AI, machine learning and money decide.

A proprietary algorithm controls what appears in each user’s News Feed. It takes into account who users are friends with, what kind of groups they have joined, what pages they have liked, which advertisers have paid to target them and what types of stories are popular or driving conversation.
The NewsFeed algorithm is not public, the public and academics are just guessing..

Algorithmic Accountability
Journalistic investigation of computational power structures

Nicholas Diakopoulos

To cite this article: Nicholas Diakopoulos (2015) Algorithmic Accountability, Digital Journalism, 3:3, 398-415, DOI: 10.1080/21670811.2014.976411
• 2017 - Cabridge Analytica scandal (data of 87 million users - Trump, Brexit,…)  
• Problem - preferences of scandals, controversies, emotions - regardless of content and truthfulness  
• 2018 - MSI doctrine - Meaningful Social Interactions - "people connect, not divide" - preferences of content of friends in order to reduce the share of lies and misinformation - but again the emphasis on ATTRACT (most controversial).
Problem of MSI

- Prefers the most shocking, emotional, divisive, arousing fear and anger! Like, emoticon, comment, share / more discussion / and the power of the post is growing !!!

Weight Decision 12/15/2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Final Weight for 2018Q1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Like</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaction, Reshare without Text</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-sig Comment, Non-sig Reshare</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-sig Message, RSVP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant Comment, Significant Reshare, RSVP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant Message</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groups Multiplier (Non-friends)</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strangers Multiplier (non-friend-of-friend, small pages)</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MSI deployed due to declining interest

Pre-MSI Trends: engagement was broadly declining until 2018H1

Comment decline:

Like decline:

Re-share decline:
FACEBOOK AND COVID

CORRECT INFORMATIONS ARE NOT DISTRIBUTED

For more than a month, Facebook researchers warned that comments on vaccine-related posts—often factual posts of the sort Facebook sought to promote—were filled with antivaccine rhetoric aimed at undermining their message, internal documents reviewed by The Wall Street Journal show. The comments ranged from personal objections all the way to debunked falsehoods and conspiracy theories.

Despite Mr. Zuckerberg’s effort, a cadre of antivaccine activists flooded the network with what Facebook calls “barrier to vaccination” content, the memos show. They used Facebook’s own tools to sow doubt about the severity of the pandemic’s threat and the safety of authorities’ main weapon to combat it.
• Antivax influencers used MSI tools - emotional, shocking posts, video photos
• August 2020 - TOP10 antivax accounts 4x more views than TOP10 relevant sources
• It is not an expression of opinion, but a targeted manipulation of the public by means of distorted or false information / with the aim of making money /.
Proč dvanáctka?

- Mapování 100 000 příspěvků
- Zdálnivě velké množství příspěvků nakonec pochází od 12 antivax tvůrců, jen jsou sdíleny v prostředí echo-chambers.
- 12 tvůrců na tom velmi slušně vydělává
  - Neobsahují fakta a ověřené informace, ale OBRÁZKY A EMOCE
This post claims that “Satan” is behind the COVID vaccine and discourages audience members from receiving the vaccine.
TRUTH OR LIE – DOES NOT MATTER

• Zuckerberg does not want to delete demonstrably false contributions: due to impartiality and freedom of speech
• Paradox - those who opposed the mainstream became the mainstream
• Emotional and shocking videos will receive millions of views, comments, likes in hours
Why?

• New technologies - old thinking
• Many-Many communication paradigm
• Fraud, data misuse, manipulation
• The use of social networks does not create the promised equality!
• The user loses to the algorithm
Interesting reading