

# INVESTIGATION OF USER ADAPTABILITY AND SHARING PATTERNS ON MULTIPLE SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

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## ABSTRACT

Emergence of new features on social media platforms have become a daily occurrence. Stories, live videos, memories and various other emerging features are a crucial part of most of the popular social media platforms. Through this study, we conduct a qualitative assessment of user adaptation to these revolutionizing social media features. The aim of this study is to understand user preferences based on platforms, their adaptability and usage of these features. This study derives conclusions based on a semi-structured interview conducted on 18 users in their early twenties in the UAE. The study derives conclusions on changes in user behavior on Facebook, user strategies for managing different audiences and content across social media platforms, views on cross-linking and cross-sharing of social platforms and using social media as a common portal to keep track of daily happenings. The study finds that users treat social media platforms distinctly while tending to share different contents on each platform depending on the nature of the content and the audience of each platform.

## KEYWORDS

Social Media, Content Management, Privacy, Cross-Sharing, Millennials

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Social media (SM) platforms are now an essential part of our daily communication and interaction with acquaintances. In fact, SM has evolved such that it is no more just a domain to connect with friends; users commonly interact with other social groups as well, including but not limited to their family relatives, co-workers, and old friends (Stutzman & Woodrow, 2012). As new platforms emerge, people now have an opportunity to be constantly connected more than ever. This has led to an increase in the cautiousness of users when deciding what to post where. A strategy adapted by users is to maintain privacy and sense-of-comfort by keeping their

audience zones separate on different services (Lampien, et al., 2011). With the revolutionizing use of social media platforms, a variety of platforms are competing, sometimes by creating their own new features and sometimes by replicating other's successful features like "stories". Users choose between various platforms depending on the features that platform offers (Katrin, 2016). Features can vary from status updates to stories and pictures to posts, whatever attracts the user better.

Sharing news on social media has become a trend among today's generations. The process of sharing news over social media platforms reflects on the social leadership attributes and enables users to perceive themselves as opinionated leaders, especially when they acquire a lot of friends and followers (Kümpel, et al., 2015). Expressing political views over social media platforms has become very common in the present-day scenario. Political parties have created their social media handles to address the public directly and to enable an inside view of the opinions of their followers. People take to their social media accounts to rant or praise their country's political stance (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013). However, sometimes users regret sharing certain content, especially over Facebook as the content might depict sensitivity or reach an unintended audience (Wang, et al., 2011).

Facebook was once the primary SM platform for users. Ever since the rise of other platforms such as Snapchat and Instagram, users divide their usage time on more than one platform. This brings into question Facebook's status as the 'primary' social networking site among users. A study has already established that users spend most of their social media time on Instagram, with Snapchat being a close second, followed by the likes of Facebook and Twitter (Alhabash & Ma, 2017). With new platforms come new features. Snapchat's popularity is due in part of the time-limited 'stories' that allows users interact more privately and intimately allowing a greater sense of binding and connection (Piwek & Joinson, 2016). On the other hand, Instagram is designed to allow users to share filtered photos and videos, making it a much more 'visual' mode of communication than Facebook. Instagram brings the 'coolness' and 'creativity' factor that is a driving source of motivation for users (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016).

With new emerging platforms, people have an opportunity to be constantly connected more than ever, yet users may exhibit significant cautiousness when selecting the people with whom they connect and when deciding what to post where. Privacy plays a crucial role in the usage of different social media platforms. A variety of distinct privacy options have been offered by various platforms like blocking, hiding, unfriending etc. This allows the user to restrict information to a certain group of individuals as per their personal choice. Studies suggest that gender plays a significant role in how users opt for privacy in their online social presence. It appears that 67% of the female users prefer keeping their profiles restricted to only friends, compared to 48% of the male users. In 2012, around 63% of users have been actively pruning their profiles, by removing unwanted friends, tags, posts and pictures (Madden, 2012). Given that the study was conducted in 2012, there is a high possibility that the percentage has increased relatively over the years. Users may have different privacy principles based on their ethnic origin and individualism (Wang, et al., 2011). Research suggests that anticipating privacy concerns related to trust based on socio-ecological factors can help social media platforms gain a better understanding of user needs in terms of online privacy (Thomson, et al., 2015). Cultural factors play a huge role in user decision of the content and type of information to be shared across (Zakaria, et al., 2003). Read receipts for messages that are provided by many social media platforms also affects the choice of use of that platform. Users experience various emotions like anxiety and negativity on discovering that their message was read by the recipient but not responded toward (Hoyle, et al., 2017). Emotions may also arise over privacy management of

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co-owned pictures, as (M. Such, et al., 2017) suggests that most users have Multiparty Privacy Concerns over co-owned pictures. Different users tend to perceive co-owned pictures in different ways, especially based on the audiences of co-owned pictures. Whereas, most of the conflicts get resolved amongst the users, some of them lead to unfriending and some are left unresolved.

One strategy adopted by users to maintain privacy and a sense-of-comfort involves keeping their audiences separate on different services (Lampinen, et al., 2011). (Zhao, et al., 2016) point out that different platforms provide opportunities to facilitate the diverse needs of users. Multiple SM platforms allow users to build gaps between their audiences, which allows them to post content targeting a specific group. (Piwek & Joinson, 2016) point out that 80% of the participants in their study interacted regularly with no more than 12 users on Snapchat. (Vidak & Kim, 2014) derive from their study that social approval is one of the factors that plays a role in user decisions regarding making posts. Users often share posts either when they think their friends might find interest or humor in them.

Within the context of privacy controls and cautious connection, linking between multiple SM platforms allows for more robust and more convenient social interaction. When signing up for new SM tools, an option of signing in with a Facebook username and password is often provided. This allows users to easily sign up on other social media and to link other platforms with Facebook. 'Cross-linking' refers to connecting one SM tool with another by using one's social network credentials to log in to other platforms. By linking social media platforms, users can make benefit of multiple options, including connecting with the same friends on other platforms without having to search for them. 'Cross-sharing,' a term described by (Zhao, et al., 2016), refers to sharing the same content on different platforms to target audiences on both.

Studies suggest that users choose a specific SM platform based on the task or the nature of content they are planning to share, especially with regards to how it may affect others' view of them. Self-presentation in social media is a major aspect considered by users before deciding the platform and usage. The tools offered by various SM platforms to enable the user in achieving certain perceptions by friends are crucial. Shared information may be of a sensitive nature resulting in exposure to cyber risks (Sleeper, et al., 2016) (Gross & Acquisti, 2005). Research explores that gender differences also play a role in terms of comments, likes and feedback when it comes to sharing content over Facebook. Women get more attention for sharing about their personal lives compared to males, whose sports and political content receives less attention on Facebook (Wang, et al., 2013). In another study, regarding content sharing and privacy, findings suggest that female users prefer keeping their profile setting on Facebook as private compared to male users who tend to keep their Facebook profiles public (Fiesler, et al., 2017) (A. DeVito, et al., 2017).

## 2. SOCIAL MEDIA PATTERNS AND USAGE

The current study aims to analyze the decision-making process of users and their intentions when selecting the features, they use, and the posts they make as well as their method of managing content on multiple SM platforms. We ask participants to determine how their adaptability to multiple platforms has affected their usage time on Facebook and the role Facebook now plays in their daily SM usage. We also explore how interviewees make use of cross-linking and cross-sharing features. Overall, we cover four major aspects of social media

in this study: separating audience and content on SM, cross-linking and cross-sharing on User adoption of the Story feature on Facebook, Instagram, or Snapchat:

- *Audience separation based on distinct platforms*
- *Nature of content variation based on distinct platforms*
- *Using social media as a hub for updates on latest news, gossip, public figures and products*
- *Effect on the time spent on Facebook due to popularity and preference of other platforms (e.g. Instagram, Snapchat)*
- *Cross-linking and cross-sharing social media: Convenient or unnecessary?*
- *Facebook usage norm amongst Generation Y*
- *User perception of Facebook's added features: Story, Live video & Memories*

## 2.1 Methodology and Findings

Data were derived by conducting semi-structured interviews of 18 participants living in the United Arab Emirates, mostly in their early twenties, falling into the category of 'young adults.' Table 1 shows the demographics of these participants. Participants were selected on the condition of their usage of more than one SM platform. Face-to-face interviews were conducted, each lasting approximately fifteen minutes to twenty minutes depending on user's responses. The interviews were recorded using a transcriber and analyzed in an iterative manner to detect recurring answers to deduce the number of interviewees selected were sufficient (Church & Oliveira, 2013). The qualitative approach of thematic analysis was used to deduce user sharing patterns and decision-making processes regarding multiple aspects addressed in this study pertaining to social media platforms.

Table 1. Demographic Details of Interviewees

Gender	<b>Male</b>	8	Employment Status	<b>Student</b>	14
	Female	<b>10</b>		Employed	<b>4</b>
Age Group	17 – 20	<b>3</b>	<b>Education Level</b>	High School	<b>1</b>
	21 – 25	<b>12</b>		Undergraduate	<b>15</b>
	26 – 30	<b>3</b>		Post- graduate	<b>2</b>

### 2.1.1 User adoption of the Story feature on Facebook, Instagram, or Snapchat

We asked users to identify the social platforms on which they use Story feature and to describe their decision-making process in adopting a new feature such as this. The Story feature brings about an 'ephemeral' sense to social media, a chance to incorporate an 'in-the-moment' feeling on posts, which also brings about spontaneity to the feature (Verstraete, 2016). This idea of spontaneity may appeal to users as it may lessen their need to filter whilst posting. In fact, in 2013, Snapchat used this feature as their marketing point and has been thriving ever since (Dayter & Mühleisen, 2016). While a lot of users do incorporate the 'Story' feature into their daily usage, it is important to point out that there are some that do it to follow the norm, and not necessarily because they like it. One user said, "*I definitely use this feature, but my usage is*

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*mostly limited to Snapchat. I don't use it at all on Facebook. I really don't see the point of having it on Instagram too, but I just use it sometimes because of Boomerang.*” Boomerang is a feature associated with Instagram that allows users to record short videos that continuously loop when viewed. One user mentioned following stories on Instagram, but when it comes to using it, he states, *“I don't usually put up any stories myself because I find Instagram stories inconvenient to use.”* Users were asked the driving factors that lead them to put up a Story. A user said, *“Usually when I put something up [on Instagram] as a Story, it is probably because it is something new to me. For example, I go skydiving. It's a cool thing to happen, so I want people to know 'Oh look, I went skydiving and I survived.' It could also be a dish I tried, and I want people to know, so I put it up.”* Another user stated, *“It is because of the filters that Snapchat provides that I use it, [otherwise] I don't use it like a normal user.”* Another user said, *“I don't like the story feature on Facebook, but I love it on Instagram and I use it very often, whatever I feel is interesting I immediately story it”*. Many users denied using the feature on Facebook either due to inactiveness on Facebook in general, or because it is already available on two other platforms as well. Users showed a tendency to stick to one platform when posting stories instead of adapting the feature on all three.

### **2.1.2 Audience Separation based on Distinct Platforms**

Having separate SM platforms gives users an opportunity to build a divide between the audiences they share their posts with. One user mentioned, *“Facebook is mostly for family and old friends from high school. Instagram is for recent friends from my university. I hardly have any family members there. For me, Snapchat is a mixture of high school and university friends, even some family members”* (M. Such, et al., 2017). This user has intentionally customized her followers and friends on her social platforms such that it allows her to target her audience based on general content and personal content (Sleeper, et al., 2016) (Gross & Acquisti, 2005). Some users even use these platforms to create a gender-gap between their audiences. *“On Snapchat I have very close friends, mostly girls. On Instagram I have cousins and even guy friends. So, I wouldn't post my pictures on Instagram because I don't want them to see me, but on Snapchat I would since it is only girls and that allows me to be private”*. One user stated, *“I have Facebook since 2012 but I recently created my Instagram account and I intentionally don't add a lot of people there because I would like to keep it restricted to close people compared to the 600-random people I have added on Facebook”* (Wang, et al., 2011 ). We notice that Snapchat, being a platform that emerged when Facebook and Instagram were already a success, has made people more cautious about the audience they share with, and thus it tends to be more personalized. *“On Facebook and Instagram, I also have people who I don't know, so I won't be as comfortable posting my personal content on these as much as Snapchat, because the people I know on Snapchat are close ones.”* When asked about the decision that leads to separating viewers, one user stated, *“Well, we have to make use of the convenience each social media tool offers. Not everyone's a close friend of yours. Some are friends of friends. Some are workplace colleagues whom you wouldn't want to get into your personal space.”* This only goes on to show the increasing cautiousness of users on different online platforms. While there was a time when limited social media gave users the perception that their audience was sympathetic or like-minded in their opinions or online habits, this may not be the case anymore (Brake, 2012). Visibility of the content they post and the target audience to which these posts are directed are driven by varying motivational factors with varying expected reward values (Bazarova & Hyung Choi, 2014). While these self-disclosure motivations were previously limited to one platform, emergence of different social media with different functions has only made it easier for users to

categorize their audience and target them based on different motives. There were a small number of users though, who did not feel the need to distinguish among their viewers. *“I only accept friends [followers] who I know, so I don’t worry about keeping the audience separate.”*

### **2.1.3 Nature of Content Variation based on Distinct Platforms**

Users also take into consideration the nature of the content of posts they make on each SM platform. When asked about how they decide what to post where, a user said, *“On Facebook, typically I have the whole school and half of university friends. That’s around 200 to 400 friends, so I must think a lot before I post anything. I try to be very careful about what I post on Facebook. I have more freedom when posting things on Instagram.”* This statement supports the deduction made in the previous section, indicating that by separating each platform with a different target audience, users have intentionally customized the level of disclosure exposed in each one of them. Another user stated, *“I keep my posts separate by keeping two accounts on Facebook and Instagram: one for family and one for friends. I would choose more wisely before I post anything on my family account.”* While privacy may be a major concern for users, it is also their personal relationships and emotional proximity with their audience that drives the content they share. A female user said, *“I would never share on Facebook the content I share on Instagram and Snapchat because on Facebook I have a lot of random friends and followers and I wouldn’t be comfortable with sharing about my personal life on that platform.”* A male user responded similarly, *“I have around 2000 friends on Facebook which includes my family members so if out late-night partying I would be sharing those posts on more personal accounts like Snapchat and Instagram but never on Facebook”* (A. DeVito, et al., 2017). Users also showed a pattern of separating their content based on the sensitivity of it. *“I will mostly post quotes on Facebook. If it’s something personal, then I’d go for Instagram.”* Another user stated, *“Even the smallest of things, I would post them on Snapchat. Snapchat is more personal, so no one will judge me. I would think twice before I post something on Instagram.”* The user responses only solidify the deductions that emotional and personal experiences are more likely to be shared on more privatized modes of communication (Waterloo, et al., 2018). There are users, though, who link their social platforms for posting the same content on both, even if the audience they keep on both are separate. *“If I post something on Instagram, I select the option of putting it on Facebook. Whatever goes on Instagram goes to Facebook too.”*

### **2.1.4 Using Social Media as a Hub for Updates on Latest News, Gossip, Public Figures and Products**

Social media is not only used for communication with friends and family. Users keep up with the latest updates and happenings around the world. When it comes to following public figures, most users stated following them on Instagram. *“I use Instagram to follow my favorite celebrities, just to see what they have been up to, the kind of lifestyle that they have. I feel Instagram is more personal than Facebook, so I feel a connection to them.”* Followers idolize the lifestyle of celebrities. Whether it is their fashion sense, their favorite holiday destinations, or even their style of posts, users tend to be influenced by their choices (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Users use SM to stay informed about the latest products of their favorite brands available in the market. *“The brands advertise their products, so I get to know more about them. If I like a brand, I don’t have much time to keep track of them, so this is a way to stay in the know. I won’t go to their website to find out”* (Katrin, 2016).

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Reviews of products on social media dramatically affect and impact the level of customer satisfaction (Ramanathan, et al., 2017). Users mentioned the helpfulness of the reviews of products they get to read through social tools. *“If I see most people disagreeing with a product, I would know not to waste my money and time on it.”* Marketing of products and user feedback on social media has become a large contributor to their success. Studies have shown that following celebrities on Instagram also influences the buying behavior of users. It has now become a common marketing strategy by various brands to promote their products through ‘Instafamous’ influencers, more so because of the effect these lower-end celebrities have on users. It has been found that buying a product endorsed by celebrities has a positive effect on users’ self-esteem (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017).

For many users, Facebook has become a common hub to keep track of information of their interest. *“I do follow fitness and grooming pages. I follow the updates and try to get an idea of the products that are in the market and how they could benefit me.”* For example, a user in the field of business mentioned following business-related magazines and newspapers. Another user said, *“Facebook is a very public space, so I keep it just for general updates. I find Twitter very useful for real-time, by-the-second updates. I’m a sports fanatic. If I’m on the move, and there’s a cricket match going on, it matters that I keep getting updates, and this is where Twitter helps.”*

Another user points out the helpfulness of Twitter in terms of keeping track of the latest news. *“If I hear about something happening at NASA, all I must do is open Twitter quick, [type in] hashtag NASA, and I’d know what’s happening.”* Another user stated, *“When it comes to keeping up to date with celebrity news or games I always depend on Facebook because there are so many pages and updates and on Instagram and Snapchat I would have to mostly depend on my friends whom I don’t trust in this matter.”* Another user added, *“Facebook is the place for gossip and latest news on celebrities because everything goes viral there, like Sridevi died, everyone knew because of Facebook that she died before they could even get to the news channels.”* User patterns in terms of reading news content have shifted from active searching on news websites or local newspapers to just ‘encountering’ news on social media along with all the other content on their feeds. This notion of ‘incidental news’ allows users to stay in-the-know due to their already continual connection to their social media profiles (Boczkowski, et al., 2017).

### **2.1.5 Effect on the Time spent on Facebook due to Popularity and Preference of other Platforms (e.g. Instagram, Snapchat)**

Over the years, Facebook has transformed from a primary means of communication for users to one of multiple modes of connection. The intensity of usage and time spent on Snapchat and Instagram has been found to be much higher than that on Facebook among young adults (Alhabash & Ma, 2017). We analyze the effect of this on the amount of time spent on Facebook, especially since the emergence of Instagram and Snapchat. We asked users in this study how their relationship with Facebook has evolved. One user said, *“Up until six to seven years ago, people would use Facebook just to catch up and connect with their friends. Now, the importance of Facebook as a tool to communicate has reduced. The elder generation do not prefer using so many tools and still find Facebook very useful, since they’ve now become used to it. For them, learning new tools like Snapchat and Instagram could be troublesome. Whereas the younger generation now directly communicates through WhatsApp.”* This may be why most users in this study acknowledged that Facebook is no longer their primary social network. *“I always prefer using Snapchat and Instagram to Facebook because I don’t see the point of Facebook*

*anymore,” one participant stated. Another user pointed out, “Based on my recent social media activity, I have hardly used Facebook at all, because it is a very public space where you’ve got friends, family, workplace colleagues. So, I keep it just to see what’s happening out there in the world.”*

One reason why users have driven away from Facebook is because other social platforms now better serve their purpose. The entertainment and convenience factor offered by Snapchat and Instagram features are the motivating factors that have driven this shift (Alhabash & Ma, 2017). *“Basically, what I do on Instagram now is what I used to do on Facebook. I would post on Facebook if I wanted to post about prom, or any sort of event, and I used to make an album, now, it is all on Instagram.”* A user stated that the same reason applies to sending messages to friends. *“Before, Facebook was my way to have contact with my friends. Now, if I need to talk to someone, I will either Snapchat them or send them a direct message on Instagram. I don’t use Facebook for keeping in contact anymore.”* Facebook has indeed lost its appeal over the past years ever since other platforms entered the game. Users have now turned to other platforms as their primary means of sharing and communicating with friends.

Perpetual entertainment is a compelling factor that makes the use of social media amongst young adults unique. The instant visual updates are more engaging and thus also more entertaining to the users (Karlis, 2013). A user identifies, *“The idea of Facebook was to connect with friends and friends of friends. I used to get a lot of friend’s requests eight years ago. Today, it has reduced to zero. Nobody sends friend requests unless they know me well.”* A user in her late teens said, *“I don’t have a Facebook account, I never felt the need to create it as all of my friends are active users of Instagram and Snapchat and we prefer those platforms.”* Another user’s opinion was, *“Facebook is only for official use. All my fun stuff, personal life and things I like to share with friends is done via Instagram and Snapchat.”* We notice user preferences for sharing information about their personal life have gradually drifted away from Facebook. This may again stem from privacy related issues. Facebook users have been found to be vigilant and protective of their privacy, although that does not dissuade their social activities on the platform (O’Brien, et al., 2012). A majority of Facebook users tend to have a wide awareness of their online privacy, however uncertainty still lingers due to various privacy debates in the recent years (O’Brien, et al., 2012).

### **2.1.6 Cross-Linking and Cross-Sharing Social Media: Convenient or Unnecessary?**

When a user first decides to join Instagram or Snapchat, there’s an option available to ‘Sign-in with Facebook.’ This not only makes the process of joining an application easier, but also allows users to easily link their Facebook friends to other platforms as well. By linking social platforms, users can easily post on one platform, and share it on the other at the same time. This method of cross-sharing provides the convenience of bridging the gap between two or more SM platforms. In some cases, even when users sign up separately, they later link their Facebook account for the same reason. Social dynamics among different audiences on different platforms is also a key aspect when users make channel considerations (Sleeper, M. et al., 2016). We asked participants their views on cross-linking social media to share the same posts on multiple platforms at once. According to one participant, *“I logged in to Instagram with my Facebook account because of the convenience, but I do not want what I post on Instagram to be there on Facebook, so I never connect my posts. On Facebook I have people who I cannot share personal posts with because I don’t even know them.”* We notice here that users’ willingness to keep their content or audience separate on social media is a driving factor leading to the decision to not link them. *“I would*

*never link my Instagram posts to Facebook. My audience on Facebook is huge. I like to keep them separate. If I'm posting it on Instagram and then sharing it on Facebook too, I'll feel like I'm just diverging [sic] both, so what would be the point?"* Cross-linking platforms does leave a door open in cases when users decide to share information on other tools; however, most prefer the convenience of having a divide between them. *"At times, it is okay to break the rules, but I keep one application for its use alone."* On the other hand, some participants also pointed out the need to share posts with friends on Facebook who are either not part of their more personalized space on other platforms, or do not use any alternate forms of social tools at all. *"I have this very cool aunt who loves knowing what I'm up to, but she is not on Instagram. So, to let them know what's up, I sometimes choose the option to also share on Facebook."* Users do sometimes make use of the composite features offered by each platform based on the nature of their posts, which could be content driven, task driven, or audience driven (Sleeper, M. et al., 2016).

### **2.1.7 Facebook Usage Norm amongst Generation Y**

This study has explored the evolution of Facebook since the emergence of other SM platforms, especially Instagram and Snapchat. It has already been established that the usage intensity on Facebook amongst young adults is much less than on Snapchat and Instagram (Alhabash & Ma, 2017). This may also be correlated to the 'creativity' and 'coolness' components that platforms like Instagram provide, as well as their being means by which to document social activity worth sharing (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). Most participants admitted that the time spent on Facebook has significantly decreased and acknowledged the preference of other tools to stay connected with friends. According to one participant, *"The older generation would still use it for both [information and communication], because over the years they have become used to Facebook. The younger generation is more adaptable. It is all about which tool captures the imagination of the audience: through convenience or through features?"* It is true that the older generation widely adopted Facebook, and one of the reasons youngsters have moved away from it is because it was no longer appealing to engage on a platform where audience members of all ages remain connected. The elder generation is more likely to maintain their comfort zone on Facebook while the younger generation is more adaptable to newer emerging platforms (Lang, 2015). The sense of belonging which was once seen on Facebook has now drifted to platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat. Psychological factors such as social network fatigue (Zhang, et al., 2016) may also be associated with usage decrease and the gradual shift away from Facebook, especially considering the wider range of 'friends' on the platform and the need to drive away from them without having to 'unfriend.'

Yet, we notice that most users still use Facebook despite decreased activeness on the platform. One user stated, *"Based on my recent social media activity, I have hardly used Facebook at all, because it is a very public space where you've got friends, family, workplace colleagues. So, I keep it just to see what's happening out there in the world."* Facebook has become a common center for users to get their information of interest all from a news feed. While Instagram and Snapchat have becoming the primary choice for posting personal information, users have evolved their use of Facebook such that it is now their go-to tool for information of their interest. Facebook is still used as a hub to keep track of old friends, but its communication factor has transformed such that it is only used to connect with long-distance acquaintances or people with whom users have minimal interaction. *"I sometimes do still use it [Facebook] as a communication tool. I get to stay in touch with a lot of cousins. They've always been far away. Maybe I've met them just twice. So, this is a way to stay connected."* Another

user said, *“For me Facebook is mostly a one-way street, I use it to get information on friends and family and the world, when I want to communicate with someone I prefer more personal platforms like WhatsApp or even Instagram.”*

### **2.1.8 User Perception of Facebook’s Added Features: Story, Live Video & Memories**

Due to competition with newer platforms, Facebook has implemented several updated features. In recent years, Facebook introduced ‘On This Day’ Memories, a unique feature that allows users to view their posts made on the same date in a past year, with the option to share it again. In addition, Facebook followed in the footsteps of Instagram and Snapchat and introduced its Story feature as well. Users can also make ‘live videos,’ giving way to real-time sharing.

We asked users whether these features have helped increase their activity on Facebook. According to one participant, *“I see friends sharing old memories from their high school years. Since we are all separated from each other now, it kind of makes others want to share them too and interact like the old times.”* Another user stated, *“I like the memory features a lot, it gives me nostalgia and I love re-posting what I posted 3 years ago, makes me re-live those moments, its sweet and cute.”* Millennials have been on Facebook long enough to see memories pop-up from five to ten years ago. ‘On This Day’ memories allow them to reminisce about shared good times in the past. Considering that most posts uploaded on social media tend to be intentionally positive and a reflection of generally the pleasant aspects of their experiences, they also bring about a bias of rosy retrospection (Konrad, et al., 2016) on which Facebook has adeptly capitalized.

While the old memories feature is unique to Facebook, features offered on multiple platforms were shown to have less or even no success in drawing users to Facebook. When asked about the ‘live video’ feature on Facebook, one user said, *“Live videos definitely allow for more connected community.”* This is a feature that allows on-the-spot sharing, further connecting users. We tried to determine its popularity on Facebook in comparison to other platforms. One user stated, *“Even though live videos were there on Facebook before they came into Instagram, I think they became more popular because of Instagram.”* As for the Story feature, our participants denied using it at all on Facebook. Another user said, *“Facebook is good, not just for me, I enjoy their live video and memories feature, but the story feature doesn’t work for me as it has a larger audience.”* Considering that Snapchat kickstarted the in-the-moment, ephemeral sense of content sharing, it seems unlikely for users to divert back to Facebook to use the ‘Story’ feature in particular. We do notice, though, that Facebook’s strategy of implementing features similar to other popular platforms is being incorporated by Snapchat as well, which has now introduced its own ‘Memories’ feature.

## **2.2 Discussion**

This study identified the choices and decision-making processes of users when posting content on SM. It also explored the evolution of Facebook with the constant emergence of other social platforms. We predict that young adults tend to be more adaptable to the constantly emerging new platforms and their features, especially taking into account the ever-growing convenience and personal touch these new forms of media tend to provide. We notice from our findings that most participants have matured in their decision-making process with the emerging platforms and features. Users are now more cautious when making a choice regarding the posts they share.

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These participants demonstrated a more careful approach in dealing with new social platforms (Instagram and Snapchat), especially when it comes to maintaining the privacy of their content. The online awareness of users has made them more attentive of their privacy over the years, thereby effecting their motivations behind where to disclose what on different social media platforms (Proudfect, et al., 2018). This may very well be due to the recent controversies surrounding Facebook privacy controls, specifically pertaining to manipulation of user bias during 2016 US presidential elections (Frenkel & Benner, 2018) (Frenkel & Isaac, 2018). Participant responses indicate that the intensity of self-disclosure on social media is in direct coordination with their privacy concerns and well as audience separation. For most of these participants, Facebook was a public space that connected them with a large audience including friends-of-friends and long-distance acquaintances. They, therefore, opted to personalize their other SM by being more selective of their audience. This makes it easier to them to post their content on these other platforms with a level of comfort. Behavior research has indicated that despite the easy setting changes available to users, most people stick to the default settings of the services offered to them online (Porter, 2018). We have already deduced that participants displayed vigilance in terms of their privacy, however, the ones that are still not as concerned in paying attention to their privacy settings consciously protect their privacy by managing their audience and content by separating them through multiple platforms instead. The time-limitation of posts offered by Snapchat and 'stories' on Instagram gives users more freedom to share content. While participants admitted to active usage of the Story feature on Instagram and Snapchat, none of them use it on Facebook. This may be due to the large audience users have on Facebook, most of them being distant acquaintances. Users prefer such features when it comes to sharing it with a more personalized group of connections on other SM platforms.

SM platforms are now heavily used as a marketing tool by brands. Our analysis shows that users have a positive response toward this strategy, admitting to the usefulness of the updates and reviews they receive by following brand pages. Users also admitted to following their favorite public figures on SM, mainly Instagram, as it allows them to stay up-to-date on their latest activities. Several brands now target audiences on social media to promote their products by approaching various 'Instafamous' celebrities to endorse their products. As these celebrities do not tend to be typically 'Hollywood,' users are able to better relate to them and therefore trust their endorsements and opinions (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Observing the positive attitude of users toward following their favorite brands and celebrities, we deduce that young adults are in fact highly influenced by social media marketing tools. This study also found that the increased activeness of users on Instagram and Snapchat has affected the activity of users on Facebook. The participants of this study conveyed their preference for other SM tools over Facebook. The reasons leading to inactiveness on Facebook highlight the privacy factor, wherein users are choosier in sharing personal content with their connections. A larger audience drives them away from sharing on Facebook, making more customized SM such as Instagram and Snapchat their preference.

Then, why do users continue to have a Facebook account if it is not their favored form of communication anymore? We deduce from participant responses that users want to stay loosely informed of their old and distant connections. Facebook has also evolved into a hub that delivers all information of interest via a user's news feed, thereby still serving as a mode of convenience. We notice a generalized point-of-view of young adults users where Facebook no more serves the purpose of sharing their life with friends and family. The momentary and transient quality of the features on Instagram and Snapchat provides users with a sense of a stronger

in-the-moment connection (Verstraete, 2016) that does not require their posts to be heavily filtered. While Facebook may attempt to adopt and provide users with these same qualities, we notice that users have already moved on. Despite this, Facebook still maintains its audience as an essential mode of comfort due to its unique history with social media users. In addition, Facebook is easily accessible through personal computers and is not limited to a mobile application. This makes it come in handy in situations when users may misplace or lose their mobile phones.

We explored user decisions when it comes to cross-linking and cross-sharing on social platforms. Our findings show that users are open to cross-linking their SM platforms as it allows them the convenience of logging in instantly without having to go through the sign-up process. However, users have mixed views regarding cross-sharing of posts including those using the Story and Live video features. While some find the feature unnecessary, as they would not want to share the same content on multiple platforms, others find it beneficial for instances when they would want to share their posts with a larger audience. Since, in the corporate world, Instagram comes under the ownership of Facebook, we infer that Facebook has incorporated the Story feature, and Instagram has incorporated the Live video feature, to standardize their platforms and enhance convenience for their users. However, these features have gained more popularity through Instagram than Facebook. Users are very much inclined to adopt these features, but the presence of these features on Facebook is not a contributor in increasing its popularity or usage.

Although the new players of the game like Instagram and Snapchat have taken over Facebook's audience, it still stays ahead of the game when it comes to getting brand updates, news and celebrity gossip, as posts on Facebook have a higher potential of going viral due to the prevalence of public pages and multiple share options that enable users to get updates from pages to which they have not even subscribed. Facebook has also maintained its feature of enabling high quality longer videos, which some of the new platforms have yet to adopt. Facebook has been around for nearly two decades and hence is more popular amongst the older generation, whereas millennials have shifted to the newer platforms like Snapchat and Instagram (Lang, 2015). Even though these platforms come with comparatively limited features, this is exactly what they are looking for. Millennials prefer using a more visual based platform for sharing content (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). They tend to keep their social media updated with live stories and videos of their daily activities, hence usage of Instagram and Snapchat becomes more popular amongst them. Instagram has also been the platform where a lot of young social media influencers are gaining popularity which they wouldn't have through traditional platforms like Facebook and Twitter.

### **3. FUTURE WORK**

Statistical measure of user behaviors on SM platforms could help solidify the findings of this study. For future studies on content management and user decision-making processes in social media use, group-based interviews with a wider range of audience can be incorporated as a form of data collection to prompt further discussion on every angle of usage patterns and behaviors. In addition, real-time social media usage of participants can be monitored to strengthen the sincerity of the findings. Usage patterns based on cultural norms and age difference can also be explored by involving a diverse group of participants from different parts of the world and of different age groups. We recognize that culture, religion and various other backgrounds tend to play a role in the user preference of various platforms when it comes to audience and content sharing.

## 4. CONCLUSION

We conducted a qualitative analysis of semi-structured interview responses of 18 young adult users of social to identify usage patterns and their decision-making process. We conclude that users have matured with emerging popularity and presence of multiple SM platforms, giving special consideration to their privacy by managing the audience they share their posts with. Users have taken advantage of the ‘new’ social tools by customizing them to control their audience. In addition, users tend to have a greater sense of freedom when posting content to be viewed by their closer group of acquaintances. Instagram and Snapchat are becoming the go-to platform for users, which has led to reduced activity on Facebook, largely due to the ‘publicness’ factor on the latter platform. The findings of this study also deduce the positive response of users toward social media marketing strategies. In fact, users willingly follow their favorite brand pages and celebrity figures to stay more informed and connected. We also establish the convenience of cross-sharing posts on multiple SM platforms, which allows for bridging a gap in rare instances where users are more open to sharing posts with a larger audience. The study identifies that emerging SM tools and the features they come with present opportunities to users that lure them away, leading to inactiveness on the relatively older platform of Facebook. Majority of the SM users are millennials, who tend to be more fascinated by newer, image-based platforms like Instagram and Snapchat resulting in reduced popularity of older platforms like Facebook.

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