

Social Networking Sites: Use Metrics at a Global Level

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Abstract

The paper is an attempt to unfurl the use and growth of social networking sites used in the world. The paper works at the continental level to see the use of various social networking sites in seven continents of the world. It offers a thorough insight of yearly growth of social networking sites. The study reveals that Facebook is gaining market in every continent. Facebook is the only site that is having more than 90% market share in Africa since 2010. StumbleUpon is mostly used in North America, Oceania and Europe..

Keywords: Social Networking Sites, Facebook, Youtube, Twitter

1. Introduction

Libraries are continually moving more of their content and services to digital and online formats. In present era of Web 2.0, services can also be provided in online mode and thus libraries become more user-friendly. This makes library professionals capable enough to provide real-time services. Social networking sites or SNS have given us means of providing real-time services. Recent years have brought a massive growth in the social networking phenomenon. This has become so much popular that ever-increasing number of people consider a regular fix of Facebook or Twitter or any other SNS to be a key part of their daily routine.

Boyd and Ellison (2007) define social networking sites, or SNS, as:

Web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connections, and (3) view

and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.

In simple words, a social networking service is an online service, platform, or site that focuses on building social relations among people, who, for example, share interests and/or activities. A social network service consists of a representation of each user (often a profile), his/her social links, and a variety of additional services. Social networking sites allow users to share ideas, activities, events, and interests within their individual networks. It is also used in today's modern times to meet new people and form relationships such as dating. Some of the famous social networking sites include:

- ❖ www.facebook.com
- ❖ twitter.com
- ❖ www.youtube.com
- ❖ www.stumbleupon.com
- ❖ www.reddit.com

SNSs are used in a many ways like social networks being used by teachers and students as a communication tool. Because many students are



already using a wide-range of social networking sites, teachers have begun to familiarize themselves with this trend and are now using it to their advantage. In the same manner library professionals have also started to provide services via SNSs.

2. Problem

Present century has entered into a period where library professionals need to keep track of every new innovation. Library professionals need to know the best SNSs used mostly across the globe. This study is an effort to solve this problem and tries to unfurl the highly used SNSs across the various continents of the world.

3. Scope

The scope of the study is confined to assess the growth and use of social networking sites around the globe. The study covered the period of 2009-2011 to gauge the growth of SNSs among the seven continents of the world i.e., Asia, Africa, North America, Europe, South America, Oceania and Antarctica.

4. Objectives

- ❖ To understand the use and growth of social networking sites across the globe.
- ❖ To assess the use and growth of social networking sites across the seven continents.

5. Methodology

The data was gathered from StatCounter (<http://gs.statcounter.com>) which is the one of the biggest web analytics service in the form of .csv files. The data as such collected was analysed and compressed keeping objectives of the study in view.

6. Limitations of the Study

StatCounter tracking code is installed on more than 3 million sites globally. Every month, more than 15 billion hits are recorded to these sites. As such the data collected do not claim to be sole representation of whole internet user community.

7. Related Work

New social networking sites are constantly popping up and existing ones changing. The future of this area of the internet looks far from bleak. Though some argue that Internet mediated communication is an “impoverished and sterile form of social exchange compared to traditional face-to-face interactions,” (Bargh & McKenna, 2004). Many studies have shown the opposite, that these sites actually improve communication between people. This speaks to the future of the sites, indicating that they will be sticking around for a long time. Admittedly they may not be the same sites over time, as popularity seems to fluctuate, but the fact that this technology has changed the way we communicate is inarguable and irreversible. Therefore, it seems that this form of communication will remain in use and popular. As Luo (2007), assert that “The Internet’s social aspect remains a significant driver of content and connections today”. Hempel (2005) and Dwyer (2007) found that people use social networking sites to maintain existing relationships and develop new ones. Members described an increase in their social productivity and reported the use of social networking sites to re-establish connections with lost friends and to view friends through their profile. Subjects described how they can “keep up” with little effort. Peter, Schouten, and Valkenburg (2006) conducted a study that investigates the

consequences of friend networking sites such as Friendster, Myspace, and Facebook. They began by finding out how frequently adolescents visited these websites. The results showed that adolescents visited these sites on an average of three times per week and stayed on for approximately a half hour. In late 2007, MySpace.com accounted for 80% of visits to any social networking web site on the Internet (Reuters, 2006), with its population having increased significantly between 2004 and 2007 (Lenhart and Madden, 2007; Sellers, 2006; Suh, 2007). Facebook had an estimated 1.2 million users in 2006 which grew to 21 million members in 2007 (Needham and Company as cited in Ellison et al., 2007). Ellison and colleagues (2007) reported that 94% of undergraduate students were Facebook users, spending 10–30 min online each day communicating with their “Friends List” of 150–200 people. Perhaps most interesting, the majority of these “Facebook Friends” were individuals known from the offline world; in other words, Facebook was not used as a tool to meet new people online. While new growth numbers are not available, estimates in 2006 pointed to the creation of 230,000 new accounts each day. Also, most reports suggest that about one-quarter of user profiles are of individuals under the age of 18 (Granneman, 2006), and that this population appears to fuel its growth (Boyd, 2006). Considering the geometric growth of user population thronging SNSs, it can be safely concluded that these site will dominate the socio-political and economic aspects of the globe. As has been unfurled by recent Arab spring where Egyptian youth employed SNSs to mobilise support for the revolution.

Analysis and Discussion

8. Worldwide Use

8.1 Yearly Growth

Worldwide usage of social networking sites clearly shows that Facebook has a highest market share among all other sites. Facebook has increased its market share from 48.02% in 2009 to 59.4% in 2010. It didn’t stop here and gained further market in 2011 and reaching to 65.57% market share. StumbleUpon is the 2nd leading social networking site used in the world. It has maintained its market share quite nicely from 2009 to 2011. In 2009, Twitter is holding the 3rd spot with 7.13% market share followed by reddit and MySpace with 5.76% and 4.09% share respectively. Youtube is holding 6th spot in 2009 but jumped to 3rd spot in 2010. In 2010, Twitter is at 4th place followed by reddit and Digg. Youtube lost market in 2011 but maintained the 3rd spot followed by Twitter (4.23%) and reddit (2.34%). Twitter has lost market share from 7.13% in 2009 to 4.23% in 2011. This is shown in Figure-1.

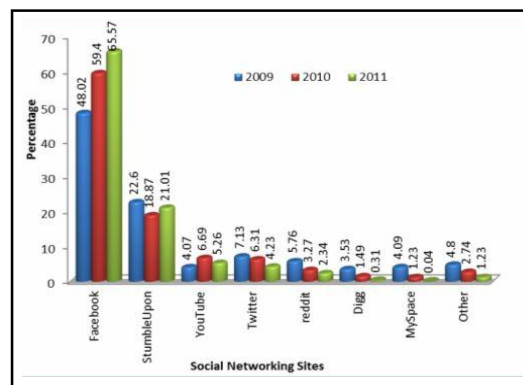


Figure 1: Yearly Growth-Worldwide

8.1.2 Cumulative Growth

The cumulative growth is seen from 2008 to ending 2011. The data clearly reveal that Facebook is the

most used social networking site with a total market share of 62.65% since last four years. Facebook leads all the other social networking sites with a huge margin. StumbleUpon is the 2nd leading social networking site in the market with overall market share for the last 4 years as 20.47%. Youtube, Twitter and reddit are on 3rd, 4th and 5th places respectively. The other related information is given in Figure 2.

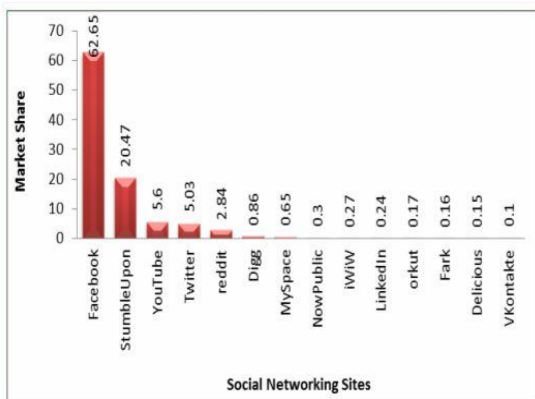


Figure 2: Cumulative Growth (2008-2011)

8.2 Use In Asia

8.2.1 Yearly growth

Asia, being the most populated continent of the world, has its own importance as it contributes 60% to the world’s total population. Naturally, social media users are in abundance in this continent. The data collected reveals that Facebook has highest market share for 2009, 2010 and 2011 consistently. The usage of Facebook has considerably increased from 81.07% in 2009 to 88.35% in 2011. Digg is the 2nd leading site with 4.13% share in 2009 followed by Youtube and Twitter with 3.54% and 3.26% market share. In 2010, the 2nd spot of Digg is taken by Youtube with total market share of 5.03% followed by Twitter at the 3rd place. The same

trend is seen for the year 2011. Both Youtube and Twitter have lost some market in 2011 with respect to 2010 but have improved in 2011 with respect to 2009. StumbleUpon has consistently occupied the 4th spot but with decreasing trend. Digg has almost lost 4% market since 2009 in Asia. The other detail is available in Figure 3.

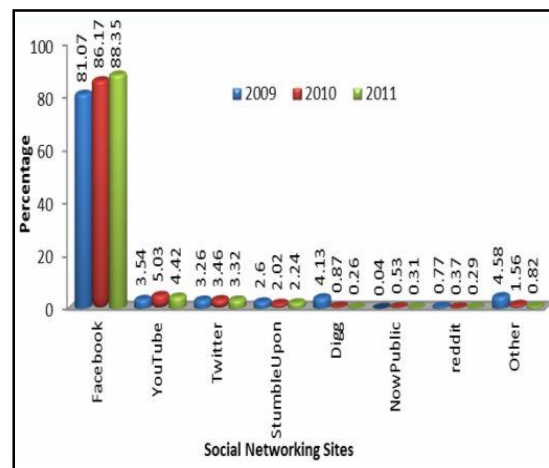


Figure 3: Use in Asia

8.3 Use In Africa

8.3.1 Yearly growth

Africa is the 2nd highly populated continent of the world. Facebook is the leading social networking site in Africa also. It has gained popularity and is maintaining the top slot consistently for the last three years. It has also increased its usage from 89.55% in 2009 to 92.65% in 2011. In 2009, StumbleUpon is holding the 2nd spot followed by Digg. In 2010, trend changed and Youtube emerged as the 2nd leading social networking site followed by StumbleUpon and Twitter. The same pattern is seen in 2011 also with Youtube, StumbleUpon and Twitter again holding 2nd, 3rd and 4th places respectively. The other detail is shown in Figure-4.

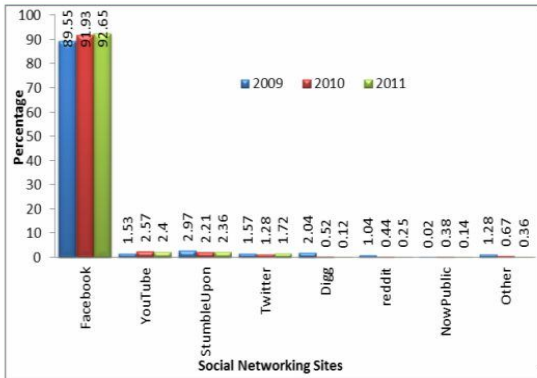


Figure 4: Use in Africa

8.4 Use In Europe

8.4.1 Yearly Growth

Europe includes some of the world’s most developed nations. The users still prefer to use Facebook but also use other social networking sites as well to a good extent. Facebook has shown increasing trend of usage in this continent also. It has increased its market share from 56.35% in 2009 to 73.2% in 2011. It has increased by 11.32% during 2009-2010 and 5.53% during 2010-2011. StumbleUpon is holding the 2nd spot in 2009 but shows a declining trend and slipping to 3rd place in 2010 and 2011. Youtube has replaced StumbleUpon at the 2nd spot for the rest of two years. In 2009, iWiW (6.52%) is holding 3rd place followed by Twitter (6.26%) and Youtube (5.44%). Twitter is holding 4th place in 2010 as well as in 2011. Figure-5 offers a lucid view.

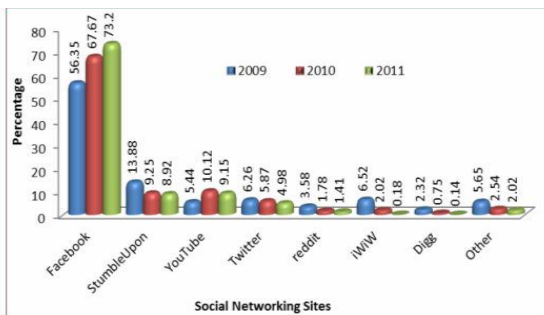


Figure 5: Use in Europe

8.5 Use in North America

8.5.1 Yearly Growth

StumbleUpon seems to be quite popular in North America. It is continuously giving good competition to Facebook. A different look is seen here where StumbleUpon is the leading social networking site in 2009 (35.02%) followed by Facebook (31.11%). But in 2010, Facebook became the leading social networking site with 44.05% usage. It maintained its top spot in 2011 also with 48.46% usage. StumbleUpon lost some market share in 2010 but regained its market in 2011 with 38.17% usage and holding 2nd spot in both the years. 3rd spot of reddit (in 2009) is taken by Twitter in 2010. Twitter, reddit, Digg and MySpace all have lost market in 2011 when compared to their market share in 2009. Youtube gained market in 2010 but again lost some market in 2011. Figure-6 gives a clear view of this analysis.

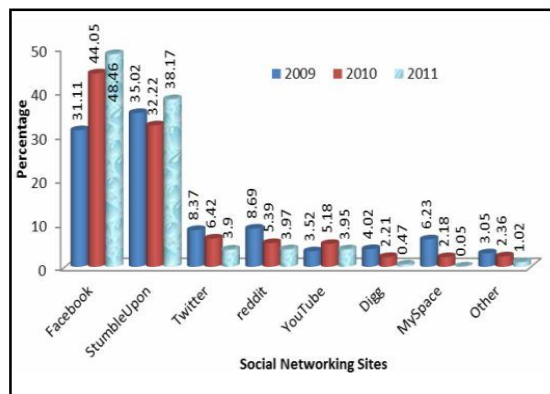


Figure 6: Use in North America

8.6 Use in South America

8.6.1 Yearly growth

Facebook is gaining huge popularity in South America. It is leading all the other social networking sites in since 2009. It has increased

from 62.32% share in 2009 to 88.03% share in 2011. Twitter has maintained the 2nd place since 2009 but has lost its market share from 15.67% in 2009 to 5.72% in 2011, although its market share increased in 2010 to 20.58%. Similarly, Youtube has maintained its 3rd place since 2009. In 2009, orkut is holding 4th position with good 6.4% market share but it lost the market share in 2010 (58%) and 2011 (0.27%). StumbleUpon gained one rank from 5th in 2009 to 4th position in 2010 and 2011. Figure-7 provides a clear view of this fact.

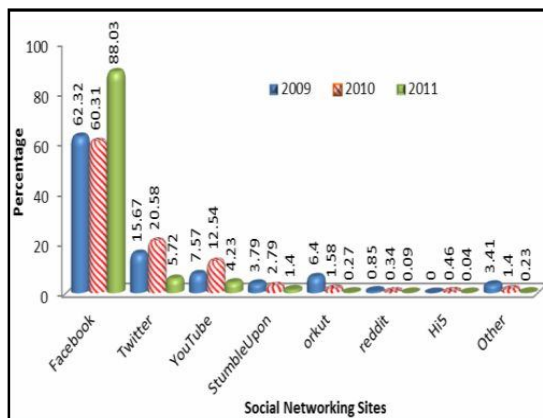


Figure 7: Use in South America

9. Conclusion

The impact of SNSs is tremendous on every aspect of life and people irrespective of region, gender and age are using it to get connected with friends, ideological clubs, scientific forums etc. This has made it the focal point of every activity done on the internet. It has been observed that Facebook is the leading social networking site used in every continent. It is gaining market in world over. Facebook is the only site that is having more than 90% market share in Africa since 2010. StumbleUpon is mostly used in North America, Oceania and Europe. StumbleUpon in North

America and Youtube and orkut in Antarctica are the only social networking sites gaining first position in 2009 only and thus leading Facebook

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