

---

# UNIT 1 ROLE & FUNCTIONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

---

## *Structure*

- 1.0 Introduction
- 1.1 Learning Outcomes
- 1.2 Historical Context
  - 1.2.1 Evaluation of Social Media
- 1.3 Forms and Types
  - 1.3.1 Social Networking Platforms
  - 1.3.2 Social Messaging Platforms
  - 1.3.3 Image-Sharing Platforms
  - 1.3.4 Video (Long & Short) Sharing Platforms
  - 1.3.5 Blogging / Micro-blogging Platforms
  - 1.3.6 Social Bookmarking Platforms
- 1.4 Communication Shifts
  - 1.4.1 Traditional Communication Scenario
  - 1.4.2 Transformative Role of Social Media
- 1.5 Role in Globalisation
  - 1.5.1 Social Media and Global Connectivity
  - 1.5.2 Impact of Social Media on Culture
- 1.6 Functions in Daily Life
  - 1.6.1 Multifaceted Functions of Social Media
  - 1.6.2 How Social Media Affects Professional Context
- 1.7 Disruptive Technologies
  - 1.7.1 Traditional Media Industry
  - 1.7.2 Education and Employment Industry
  - 1.7.3 Healthcare Industry
  - 1.7.4 Retail, Manufacturing, Customer Service Industry
- 1.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.9 Keywords
- 1.10 Further Readings
- 1.11 Check Your Progress: Possible Answers

---

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

---

Whether you are a mass communication student or not, many of you use social media platforms daily. Every section of society is involved with this platform—from school students and young adults to working professionals

and senior citizens. All have a social media presence and utilise this platform for various purposes, including accessing information, sharing updates or media content, and connecting with like-minded people. Many social media platforms are not just for personal expressions, but instead they are potent tools for communication, collaboration and dissemination of information.

The term “social media” itself denotes the social interaction among users to send and receive messages, share updates/content, and build networks with like-minded people or institutions in a robust digital environment. The social media platforms function in the tech platforms that enable instant communication across geographical boundaries.

Through this Unit, you will understand the role and functions of social media. Also, you will learn about the historical dimensions of this platform, functionalities, and its influence and impacts across various platforms through this Unit.

---

## **1.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES**

---

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Learn the historical background of social media evolution;
- Know various types of social media;
- Understand the impact of social media on global connectivity and culture;
- Describe the way our personal and professional lives have changed with social media; and
- Explain how social media has disrupted traditional industries.

---

## **1.2 HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

---

All of you must use Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, or any other mobile application. Though they started as a source of entertainment for teenagers, now they have become an amalgamation of our work, social and public lives. They have made their place in every walk of our lives. Social media is one of the platforms used to facilitate any kind of communication. Be it personal, professional or public communication, we use it to communicate with people around the world. The term social media has evolved from exchanging information electronically to virtual meeting places to marketing tools. The availability of cheap smartphones with low-cost internet data has made us hook up to any of these platforms to communicate and get our daily dose of entertainment. Social media has changed the entire information creation, distribution and consumption landscape. It helps individuals create their own content, use it as and when necessary, and share it with others.

According to [www.statista.com](http://www.statista.com), over five billion people were using social media worldwide in 2024, a number projected to increase to over six billion in 2028. The advancement of technology and the human urge to communicate have fuelled the development of social media. More than ninety per cent of people using the Internet use social media in some way or another. It is a fact that social media nowadays is not restricted to only networking. However, its arena expanded to micro blogs, podcasts, chat groups, internet forums, wikis, video and photo sharing sites, and many others. The perception of the whole world towards information creation, consumption and distribution has changed a lot. Social media users feel more comfortable nowadays expressing and sharing their thoughts and opinions with others. They are more expressive and get a platform to raise their voice, which results in power shifting to the masses.

### **1.2.1 Evolution of Social Media**

The evolution of social media has undoubtedly changed the global communication scenario. To know what social media is all about, we must study its history, evolution, and origin to understand it better. The evolution of social media was fuelled mainly by the urge to connect personally at a mass scale and the development of digital technology. The invention of the Internet during the 1950s is a milestone in the evolution of social media. As already discussed about the evolution of the Internet in other units, we will only discuss the origin of social media. Let us divide the evolution of social media into three different phases where major developments have taken place till the present day, after the invention of the Internet.

#### **Early Phase of Bulletin Boards to Online Commercial Services**

The development of the electronic Bulletin Board System (BBS) in 1979 by Ward Christensen paved the way for the public message system. The bulletin boards were attached to a modem and powered by computers. In these bulletin boards, users can log in, read and post messages to one or more categories on the local servers. However, one person at a time could dial and get access. These BBS were considered as the precursor to the present form of internet forums. The BBS reached various audiences, but it had certain constraints. These boards were considered as a precursor to the World Wide Web.

## EVOLUTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Year	Event
1960s	<b>Invention of the Internet, laying the foundation for digital communication.</b>
1979	<b>Development of the Electronic Bulletin Board System (BBS) by Ward Christensen.</b>
1979	<b>Introduction of Usenet by Jim Ellis and Tom Truscott, allowing distributed communication.</b>
1979	<b>Launch of Commercial Online Services like CompuServe, Prodigy, and The Source in the USA.</b>
1983	<b>America Online (AOL) launched, providing an online community experience.</b>
1983	<b>Jarkko Oikarinen develops Internet Relay Chat (IRC), enabling real-time messaging.</b>
1990s	<b>Growth of the Internet due to private ISPs, increasing accessibility for users.</b>
1997	<b>SixDegrees.com launched, allowing users to create profiles and connect with friends.</b>
1999	<b>Napster introduces Peer-to-Peer (P2P) file sharing, revolutionizing digital content distribution.</b>
2002	<b>Friendster launched, providing a rich online community experience.</b>
2003	<b>Launch of LinkedIn, MySpace, and Facebook, marking the rise of modern social networking.</b>
2004	<b>Web 2.0 concept gains traction, emphasizing user-generated content and interactivity.</b>
2005	<b>YouTube launched, revolutionizing video sharing and consumption.</b>
2006	<b>Twitter introduced, popularizing microblogging and real-time updates.</b>
2010	<b>Instagram launched, focusing on photo sharing and visual storytelling.</b>
2011	<b>Snapchat introduced, offering ephemeral messaging and multimedia sharing.</b>
2012	<b>Facebook acquires Instagram, expanding its dominance in social media.</b>
2016	<b>Rise of TikTok, redefining short-form video content.</b>
2024	<b>Over five billion people using social media worldwide, expected to reach six billion by 2028.</b>
Future	<b>Continued integration of immersive and AI-driven social media experiences.</b>

Commercial Online Services were started by technology giants in the USA to provide hassle-free services. Commercial Online Services is an online service where members have to pay a fee and can get access to various services such as news articles, chat rooms, emails, etc. CompuServe, Prodigy and The Source offered commercial online services in 1979 in the USA. Later, other companies came forward to provide online chat system services to the masses. America Online (AOL) in 1983 allowed its customers to build an online community. However, bulletin boards lost popularity due to widespread internet usage during the late 1990s.

## **Phase of Instant Messaging System**

The invention of the World Wide Web (WWW) has changed the whole communication scenario worldwide. Tim Berner Lee's WWW opened the path for multiple developments in the electronic communication system. The growth of the Internet has enabled human beings to engage in digital/online communication. Content innovations helped the Internet to grow and reach the ordinary masses, making it a platform for public communication. With the emergence of private Internet Service Providers (ISPs), computer users have enjoyed unlimited online services. With advances in technology, people have started to enjoy getting real-time content. The most important development in the online community segment is the 'Usenet'. Jim Ellis and Tom Truscott developed Usenet in 1979 and established it in 1980. Using Usenet, users can communicate with each other using a distributed network of local servers. Social media technology saw Serious transformations during the 1980s and 1990s.

The Instant Messaging system was the subsequent development in social media evolution. Jarkko Oikarinen developed the Internet Relay Chat in 1983. This chat system was instantly popular among the masses. Online users use Internet Relay Chat (IRC) to share files and photos and start networking with people worldwide. People have also begun sharing real-time updates. The use of hashtags (#), @ and others has started at this point in time. At the same time, AOL bought instant messaging (IM) technology from four Israeli technologists. The IM technology has helped to develop emotional icons (Emoticons), which are now a rage among social media users. Later, other technology giants such as Yahoo, MSN and Google incorporated this IM technology to extend real-time chat features to their clients.

In 1999, Napster developed a file-sharing application, Peer-to-Peer (P2P), for the first time to allow users to download music files. This application has gained popularity, and around 25 million users use it during peak times. This has been considered another milestone in the media-sharing segment. It was a step closer to making social media social for users.

## **Phase of Social Networking Sites**

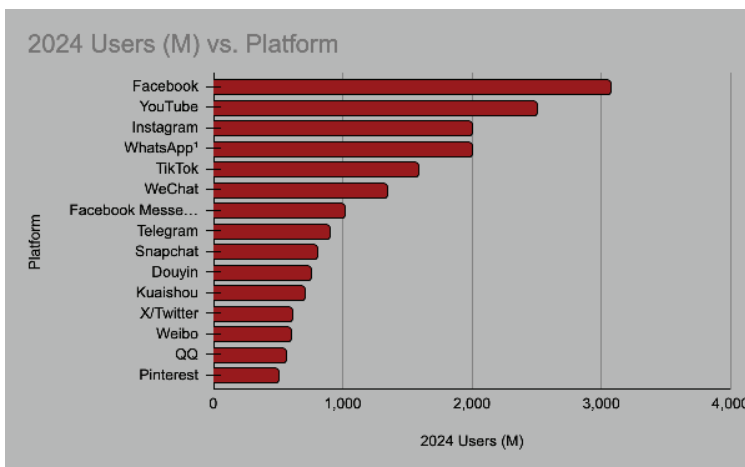
Though content-sharing applications are used to share files, they are not used for virtual communication. Computer-mediated communication (CMC) was expanding during the late 90s. The Internet enabled websites for social interaction, which were developed in the early 21st century. Developers started developing internet-based content, user-friendly interfaces and tools during the late 1990s. However, the demographic profile of internet users has changed as more and more people become online. Though the dotcom crash was a setback in the history of social media, we have come out of the losses with technological advancements. Major developments that happened in the social media segment can be traced back to Web 2.0. The fundamental concept of personalised content is attached to Web 2.0. The emergence of user-generated content in those days has added value to the businesses. The direct exchange of information through electronic devices to virtual discussion forums has fuelled the need to develop various social media platforms.

Online users have already started using various platforms to network, share content with other online friends, and upload or download any kind of file. News websites have started publishing real-time news stories throughout the globe. Using Web 2.0 technologies, social network sites have made users stand virtually at the centre of their networks and control their online space. During the early 21st century, some social networking sites tried to connect people who were known to each other. Later, other players on social network sites followed the trend. The first website that helped users create their own profiles, make friends, and form groups was SixDegrees.com in 1997. Classmate.com is another social networking site started in the US to connect with school friends virtually and have a reunion. Though Six Degrees did not operate long, it paved the way for other players to operate in the networking segment. Friendster, another social website, was launched in 2002 and was very popular. This website has also provided users with a vibrant online community experience. Other social networking sites such as LinkedIn, MySpace and Facebook were launched in 2003.

Blogging (Web Log) is another major development that needs to be considered in terms of social media history. Though blogs started as static websites, later, with technological advancements, blog writers have incorporated dynamic features to attract more readers. It is considered a powerful medium to spread your voice among the masses. Social bookmarking is another method to search, organise, store and manage online resources. Many social bookmarking sites are extending help to online users to be aware of new bookmarks.

With changing times and technological advancements, social media platforms have integrated visual and location-based services. Various platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest, and Snapchat have redefined how users interact and consume content. The smartphone revolution has altered the boundaries of online interaction, too. Smartphones have freed social media users from desktops. They have helped the users to go mobile. Some social networking sites, such as Foursquare and Grindr, have started offering user location-based services that can be accessed through smartphones. In the coming days, social media users will experience more immersive and personalised offerings as these platforms continue to evolve.

We Indians are very much proactive users of social media. Along with creating content for various social media platforms, Indians leverage these sites to grow their businesses. Social media players like Meta, Google, and others have made specific plans in India to attract the maximum number of users. As per a study conducted by Statista in 2023, most Indians reported that they consume news mostly from YouTube and WhatsApp. Facebook has the largest market share among all social media players. Statista.com reports that Facebook has around a 64% market share in India as of October 2024. The following diagram replicates the same data.



**(Biggest Social Media Platforms by User Base, 2024 - Source: www.statista.com)**

**Check Your Progress: 1**

**Note:** 1) Use the space provided below for your answers.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1. What are Bulletin Boards?

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. What is a blog? Write the names of two photo-sharing sites.

.....

.....

.....

.....

**1.3 FORMS AND TYPES**

After examining the evolution of social media, we have realised that it is a fact that shows human innovation and our desire to connect with others. Social media came into existence only to help online users connect virtually. But now, the social media landscape is changing so fast. It has come a long way from sending and receiving messages to the large digital virtual networked world. It has revolutionised the entire communication scenario. Every other day, a new platform joins the bandwagon. As far as the forms of social media are concerned, various types connect individuals of varying interests. Different types of social media platforms cater to different needs. Some platforms have more active users while others have fewer, and according to the requirements of their users, they publish content. Let us have a look at various types of social media.

**1.3.1 Social Networking Platforms**

Social networking sites are the platforms that allow users to create content, connect, share, like, and comment in the online space. Users must create their

own profiles; in return, these platforms provide rich content to engage the users. These sites provide more personalised content through text, photos, video, and audio formats. Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn and several other platforms function in this segment. All the social networking websites are free to use, which extends a push to the user base. The following paragraphs discuss a few popular social media networking sites.

**Facebook** was started in 2004 as a social networking site to provide networking services to college students in the USA. Later, it was opened to the general public in 2006. It allowed individuals to create their own profiles, add friends, and join communities of different interests. It also asks users to upload their own content on various topics of interest. It is free for all social media users. You can upload, share and edit your photos, videos, music, opinions and thoughts. It has allowed the common person to raise, publish and share his/ her feelings, emotions and voice. Now, people have started doing business on Facebook. As per reports, India leads with 314.6 million Facebook users, followed by the US, Indonesia, Brazil, and Mexico in 2024. It has integrated Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology at the backend to provide new features to social media users.

**My Space** is also a social networking website. It was launched in the USA in 2003. The main purpose of this social website was to connect with the young masses. It was the first social networking site to reach a global audience. Users can share their photos, music, movies, and other things.

**LinkedIn** was designed and developed to connect professionals working in various service fields. It was started in 2003 in the USA. LinkedIn connects professionals, job seekers, employers, and companies worldwide by providing opportunities to network within and outside the industry and create business opportunities. More than one billion users are using LinkedIn worldwide. LinkedIn, on its website, claims that it has more than one billion registered users from 200 countries and regions worldwide.

These social networking sites also have various private and public discussion forums where members discuss and comment on certain questions posted in the group. Apart from the above sites, other big corporations like Google have occasionally tried to launch various social networking platforms to attract users. Earlier, Google, though unsuccessful in this segment, launched other applications like Google Buzz, Google Friend Connect, Google Wave, and Orkut from time to time.

### 1.3.2 Social Messaging Platforms

You must use WhatsApp on your phone to chat with friends and family. The social media messaging applications have revolutionised how we communicate with our near and dear ones. Social messaging platforms provide users with a real-time messaging experience through application-based services. They allow users to send and receive messages containing text, video, audio, and multimedia files using their smartphones and mobile data. These platforms provide options to create private and public groups to have real-time discussions. The messaging app contains social media features and components to make it popular among the masses. These are considered powerful ways by online marketers to engage users and reach a

mass target audience in the present day. Let us discuss a few popular online messaging applications that we use.

**WhatsApp** is considered the most popular messaging application used around the globe. According to [www.statista.com](http://www.statista.com), in 2021, WhatsApp's user base in India amounted to approximately 493.31 million users. The number of WhatsApp users in India is projected to reach 795.67 million users by 2025. Around three billion users across the globe are using this application on their mobile devices. This is the cheapest alternative available for us to connect with anyone residing anywhere in the world. The popularity of WhatsApp grew multi-fold after the introduction of voice and video calling services through the Internet. It began its operation in 2009, but it was later acquired by Facebook in 2014. It has also integrated artificial intelligence into its applications to provide users with enhanced features and new experiences.

**Messenger** is a free messaging service from Facebook that provides voice and video calls. Though Facebook Chat was launched in 2008, it was revamped in 2010 and relaunched as a messaging platform in 2011. You can share text, photos, and videos on Messenger and facilitate group chats. Like WhatsApp, Messenger can also send the user's location to other users.

**Snapchat** is another popular American messaging application. It is also free and allows users to send text, photos, and video messages. Users can create multimedia messages using short videos or pictures, known as snaps, and send them to their friends and family. Younger smartphone users mainly use this application. It has also integrated security features to protect the privacy of the users and their data.

### **1.3.3 Image-Sharing Platforms**

In the age of the selfie craze, we are all interested in publishing our photos online. After taking photos with your smartphone, within a few minutes, you post them online on various photo-sharing sites. Multiple photo-sharing platforms are available to help us edit, upload, and manage our images. We narrate our stories, connect with our friends and share our emotions with the help of photos. Images are important in conveying messages, capturing attention, and creating interest. In this digital technology era, photos are a way of authenticating the facts and standing out in a sea of fake content. Let us discuss a few popular photo-sharing platforms that are doing fantastic work by influencing users with appealing photos.

**Instagram** is a popular photo-sharing platform that started in 2010 in the USA. It allows users to upload their photos and videos to share with their connections. Users can edit their pictures and use hashtags to organise their visual content. It has also integrated a messaging system to provide a chat feature to its users. Instagram is now also used by small and big businesses houses to expand their business. Marketing professionals and influencers use Instagram through high-quality visuals to catch users' attention. More than 230 million Indians are using Instagram, making it the No.1 user country in the world. Instagram launched its Instagram Reel in 2022, which allowed users to create and post short-format videos. As of April 2024, almost 32 per cent of global Instagram audiences were aged between 18 and 24 years, and

30.6 per cent of users were aged between 25 and 34 years. Overall, 16% of users were in the 35- to 44-year age group ([www.statista.com](http://www.statista.com)).

**Google Photos** was started in 2015 as a photo-sharing platform service by Google. It allows users to store, share, organise and edit photos and videos online. After integrating AI (Artificial Intelligence) tools into Google Photos, the Magic Editor and Magic Eraser functions allow users to enhance the visual appeal of photos and videos. It also offers privacy features for your photos and automatic backup options. Google gives users 15 GB of storage space for storing photos and videos. Users can access their visuals from any device at any time.

**Flickr** was started in 2004 during the much-hyped Web 2.0 developments. It is an image-sharing website that offers free registration. Users need to register to open an account at Flickr. During its launch, it had a chat room option called FlickrLive, where users could exchange real-time photos. Later, it started an online community for photo bloggers and researchers to host images.

Apart from these popular photo-sharing platforms, social media users also highly demand Facebook and Pinterest to share their photographs, infographics, memes, and other visual content.

### 1.3.4 Video (Long & Short) Sharing Platforms

Nowadays, YouTube is considered synonymous with videos. You all must have a YouTube account, which allows you to watch films, songs, podcasts, etc. YouTube is nothing but a video-sharing platform. Other video-sharing platforms provide visually rich content to entertain us. Through their appealing video content, they are attracting millions of users to their sites. These platforms allow independent filmmakers, content creators, and audiences to upload video content. Some video content is streaming live for the users on these platforms. Videos are the most popular form of social media content as there is no necessity for scrolling or reading; users only have to watch. With the changing trend in the audience's viewing habits, these platforms are integrating new enhanced features like an easy-to-use user interface, secure hosting, social media sharing, uploading comments while viewing, etc. Short-form videos get the attention of users. Audiences are hooked to short-format videos for their short duration and powerful content. They are easy to share, too. YouTube Shorts and Instagram Reels are the two most popular short-format video platforms. A few examples of video-sharing platforms are discussed below.

**YouTube**, the most popular video-sharing platform across the globe, is owned by Google. The First YouTube video was uploaded in 2005, and it was an 18-second film about a zoo in the USA. The video got over 200 million views, and YouTube was a hit then. It is the daily source of entertainment for all of you. People are now using YouTube as a source of income by uploading interesting video content. YouTube Live was launched in 2011 to broadcast football matches, concerts, royal weddings and other sports events. India is the largest market for YouTube across the globe. Around 476 million Indian users are getting their daily dose of entertainment from YouTube. To tap the short-form video market, Google launched YouTube

Shorts. The Shorts comprise 60-second visuals on product demos, reviews, music, dance, travel videos, etc. Advertisers are putting huge amounts of money into YouTube to tap its user base. Therefore, content creators and YouTube are doing a massive business out of all these videos.

The reel was started in 2020 by Instagram, though it was launched as a photo-sharing platform. It is a short-format video that users can create, edit and share on Instagram. The duration of the video is between 15 and 90 seconds. Companies, users, and influencers use reels to reach their target audience, friends, and clients and provide engaging and entertaining content. After the ban of TikTok in June 2020, most social media users are consuming Instagram Reels. With a smartphone, you can make reels and edit them with the Speed function. As Instagram has a library of licensed music, it is easier for the reel makers to integrate music with the video. As per reports, Instagram Reels will have around 2 billion monthly active users in 2024 (www.deamndsage.com).

Using the Software as a Service business model, Vimeo helps content creators upload video content. It is also a video-sharing platform that helps users earn money through its services. It helps users by providing various video editing tools such as a converter from image to video, video trimmers, auto caption writing, video transcription, AI-based translation and many others. It is an ad-free platform but earns revenue from the subscription model. It is also an American company headquartered in New York. Many creative professionals prefer to use Vimeo to host high-quality videos, as a few filmmakers have started this website.

### **1.3.5 Blogging/Micro-blogging Platforms**

This type of social media allows users to publish their ideas and thoughts on specific topics, write articles, etc. Blogging is a write-up where the user publishes their personal account to a wider audience on any topic of interest. Blog writers can post text, pictures, videos, multimedia files, infographics, etc., on their personal pages. It can be used for personal or professional purposes. It allows users to engage readers with interesting content. Websites like WordPress provide easy-to-design webpages where you can publish any type of content. To earn money from blogging, bloggers now use interlinking features to connect with other bloggers. The writers must update their blogs frequently. Businesses are now using blogging as a tool to reach their target audience. Nowadays, some social media websites offer community blogging features to connect people with like-minded people to discuss niche topics.

X (formerly known as Twitter) is a micro-blogging website that allows users to post short updates on the personal pages they have created. X enables users to read and post 140-character-long messages. These short messages were known as tweets. With digital technology evolving along with the Internet, blogs are also evolving from static web pages to dynamic ones.

### **1.3.6 Social Bookmarking Platforms**

If you have read an article on a website or an interesting photo or video, consider saving it for later use. Here comes the role of social bookmarking

sites that will help you to save it online in a central location. It is a platform allowing users to save, organise, manage and store their online content with other users and themselves. Online users can easily tag a website page with a browser-based tool and use it later. Social media users use different platforms' features to bookmark posts instead of saving them. It allows users to access text files, photos, videos, etc., anytime from any device. Though online bookmarking services were begun in 1996, the concept gained popularity with the launch of a social bookmarking platform, 'Delicious'. Delicious also introduced the concept of 'tagging'. Social bookmarking platforms are in huge demand as companies use social media marketing to promote their brands, products, and services. The following are some of the popular social bookmarking platforms.

**Pinterest** is a social network platform where users can search for visuals on any topic of interest and pin them to either share or save for later use. Here, users can post their visuals on their own or other users' boards and simultaneously view other pins. It was launched in 2010 and was restricted to membership by invitation only. But now it is open to all. You can get visuals on arts and crafts, food, fashion, lifestyle, travel, home décor, and many more options.

**Reddit** started as a social bookmarking site but later added many features of social networking platforms. Users are called Redditors, and they connect with each other, participate in discussions, post news and other content, and ask questions within a niche community known as a Subreddit.

**Diigo** is another social bookmarking website that was launched. The website provides bookmarking and annotation tools to its users to store, organise, and manage online content. Users can share, comment, and highlight their topic of interest with sticky notes. Researchers researching various topics are using Diigo. You can also create your own online personal library using its cloud technology.

---

## 1.4 COMMUNICATION SHIFTS

---

Since the invention of social media, everyone has witnessed a shift in the sphere of communication. Social media is now considered an indispensable part of the entire communication process. Everyone has a chance to raise a voice that needs to be heard. The way humans communicate and interact has changed. Let us discuss in detail how social media plays a transformative role in changing traditional communication models.

### 1.4.1 Traditional Communication Scenario

Traditional communication models are based on the principles of sending messages from the sender to the receiver. It believes in sending a message from one medium to many readers/ listeners/audiences. Newspapers and magazines carry one way of communication, though readers can send feedback through letters to the editors, but in rare cases. In the case of radio and television broadcasting, the same thing happens. Listeners of radio programmes had no scope to send their feedback to the radio stations. Unless the radio station, in special cases, goes for collecting listeners' feedback. Television viewers have no or less scope to send feedback to

the channels broadcasting various programmes. The feedback system was delayed or sometimes limited. After integrating digital technologies, these traditional media houses went online and are collecting instant feedback in a few cases. The media houses controlled earlier messages, and there was no scope for individual voices to be published or heard. Only professional journalists have the scope to write for various news media outlets. Media houses had limited coverage areas. They were restricted to operating within a limited geographical area. Communication in real time was not possible with traditional media.

### **1.4.2 Transformative Role of Social Media**

Social media has transformed the communication scenario throughout the world. The most important role of social media in altering the traditional communication model is the power of user-generated content. In the present scenario, a person simultaneously plays the role of message sender and receiver. Content creators create and use content that is impossible in traditional communication models. Social media allows consumers to raise their voices and be heard publicly. Here, the feedback system is instant. Two-way communication is found in the social media domain. Users can participate in various discussion forums provided by social media networks. With Internet-enabled technology, messages are reaching global audiences within a fraction of a second. Even traditional media houses use various emerging technologies to reach the global masses. Communication is happening in a more democratic way than traditional media. Different features of social media, such as speed, real-time accessibility, instant feedback, cheaper mobile data, etc., are impacting the way traditional media were used to work.

From citizen journalists to the common person, they can share news and information with acquaintances and non-acquaintances. The entire communication process has seen a transformation with hyper-local content and interactive experiences. The power the news media houses enjoyed has now been in the hands of the consumer. Consumers of information now decide what, how, when and where to get and share. Social networking sites are the new channels of communication. Bloggers, content creators and the public are the new gatekeepers of news. News is mostly breaking on social media platforms such as Facebook, X, Instagram, etc. These sites give power to the public to create news and share it on their platforms. Even journalists now depend on social media to get daily news. Social media has transformed traditional communication models into more energetic, decentralised, collaborative systems.

#### **Check Your Progress:2**

**Note:** 1) Use the space provided below for your answers.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1. How are reels different from YouTube Shorts?

.....  
.....

- .....
- .....
2. Briefly explain the transformative role of social media.
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....

---

## 1.5 ROLE IN GLOBALISATION

---

In the era of globalisation, social media has been playing an integral part in our lives. It has altered how we connect and interact with friends and family. Now, there are no restrictions on connectivity as far as geographical boundaries are concerned. People are connected with each other across the globe. Interconnectedness has been found between globalisation and social media. It is directly influencing both our connectivity and culture. It is a virtual world that impacts our culture, tradition, language, etc. Social media users are getting to know, interact with, and share the practices and customs of other societies. But at the same time, social media has posed new challenges to content creators and consumers. A risk is posed before us as far as our privacy, safety and security are concerned. Let us discuss in detail the benefits and issues attached to social media in the global communication arena.

### 1.5.1 Social Media and Global Connectivity

The major benefit of social media is its ability to connect people across physical boundaries. People from diverse places around the globe are instantly connected. It has bridged the communication gap that existed between developed and underdeveloped nations. Social media is breaking down the barriers that have existed for a long time between information-rich and information-poor countries. It helps corporations reach global customers and expand their businesses. Simultaneously, social media has created new challenges for users. It has also brought new issues like misinformation, the digital divide, and many more, creating threats before us. The following are a few positive and negative impacts that social media has had on global connectivity, which have changed the entire communication scenario of the world.

**Reach and Access of Information:** Now, anybody who has access to a device with decent internet connectivity can access information at any point in time. Social media has made the process of globalisation much faster with instant connectivity on a real-time basis. We are now informed about all the developments happening throughout the globe with a finger touch. With immediate dissemination of information and boundaryless connectivity, everyone has their share of information. Everyone stays informed about the news, events, issues, trends, etc.

**Voice for the voiceless:** Social media has given a voice to the voiceless. Earlier, people in administrative positions, journalists, politicians, and other dignitaries could present their voices. But now, with platforms like Facebook, Instagram, X, etc., users are finding space to create awareness on

various issues. Social media has given space for advocacy and activism. The #Metoo movement got its support only through social media.

**Building Private and Public Communities:** It helps people build virtual communities (both public and private) based on their common interests. These communities connect people from different locations and help them share their interests, hobbies, and a sense of support and belonging. We have seen such groups on Facebook, WhatsApp and many other platforms. Communities are formed based on various subjects of interest, such as travel, cooking, photography, yoga, saree lovers and many more. People seeking guidance or facing challenges in their lives can connect with the respective groups to seek assistance.

**Global Collaborations:** Social media has enabled business houses to collaborate with others to expand their reach. It helps countries extend solidarity and share values even in the political sphere. It also enables social work organisations to collaborate to bring social justice within human reach. Conversations are quick, and information is easily accessible with digital tools.

**Privacy Breach and Security Issues:** There are also a few challenges involved with social media. Users, knowingly or unknowingly, sometimes breach others' privacy. There is no limit set in the online world with regard to privacy. People across the globe are facing security issues. Privacy is exposed on social media platforms. It is harming relationships. Harmful comments are posted, and people are facing cyberbullying. Trolls are a common trend seen on these platforms. Personal information is made public. No such strict policy exists to control all these issues.

**Spread of False Information:** Various social media platforms allegedly spread false information, fake news and other incriminating content. They are undermining the trust and confidence of other users. The real concern here is who will be under the surveillance of whom. Unlike traditional media, no gatekeepers are found in social media. There is less scope for checking the authenticity of information. Even if the scope is there with an instant sharing option, the content creators can also not check whether the information is true or false. Though social media has transformed the globalisation process to a new height, at the same time, we should use this digital space responsibly.

### **1.5.2 Impact of Social Media on Culture**

We must focus on our culture, tradition and societal values for an effective global communication system. Human culture is dynamic and evolving now and then. However, social media presents a shared cultural experience through its varied content. It is a dominant influencer in reshaping our cultural landscape. It promotes cross-cultural values through art, culture, music, fashion and lifestyle. It also promotes the regional languages and their efforts to preserve the local culture. Now, we are getting hyperlocal content which attracts users from remote areas. It is a virtual platform that enriches users' experience of popular culture. The masses adopt popular culture only when they are recognised in the mainstream. Cultural institutions like art galleries, museums, and theatre houses are going global with digital content.

People around the globe can access their collections available on the web. These institutions are using online digital tools to meet the demands of their target audience. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, X, and others give users space to showcase their cultural practices.

The shift from a mass audience to a single user and from customisation to personalisation is also found in cultural production. We learn about the cultures of other countries. Cultural customs and traditions previously limited to geographically bound societies are now shared globally. Therefore, creative practices are seen in social media platforms. Artists are making their art on online platforms. New talents are getting space to showcase their hidden talent to the global audience. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many new talents became sensations and earned their livelihood through social media platforms. Instagram and Facebook are considered trendsetters. They influence our fashion, food habits, lifestyles, etc. However, in the name of building global culture and shaping identities, it also poses challenges for our local cultures. While adopting global and popular culture, we sometimes lose our local culture. However, we should use it to preserve our cultural diversity and harness its power to reach a global audience.

**Check Your Progress: 3**

- Note:** 1) Use the space provided below for your answers.  
2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1. How is social media affecting our culture?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

---

**1.6 FUNCTIONS IN DAILY LIFE**

---

So far, we have discussed the evolution and types of social media and their impact on our culture. Social media’s transformative role has impacted our personal and professional lives. Social media changes how we think and act and governs our personal and social behaviour. It is mandatory to have a professional profile on a social media platform if you want your recruiters to recruit you. In the professional sphere, you must also have a social media presence. It helps new businesses grow by acquiring new clients.

**1.6.1 Multifaceted Functions of Social Media**

It purely depends on how individuals use social media in their personal lives. In the personal context, social media helps us stay connected with the world and learn about the developments around us. It also provides us with our daily dose of entertainment. We are seeing films, videos and other entertainment content from YouTube, Facebook and Instagram Reels by sharing our personal content in the form of photos, videos and stories to let others stay updated about us. Some social media platforms help us to foster our creativity by uploading artistic content. YouTube tutorials are helping large audiences learn about product usage and reviews, and some videos have educational value, too.

Most importantly, it allows individuals to be actively involved and explore the world of opportunities without any fear. Those individuals who were not getting the scope to raise their voices are getting space to hear their voices to a larger audience. It adds creativity to the thinking process of individuals and gives opportunities to work and collaborate with others. However, social media also has a negative side to all this. Some people use social media platforms as a propaganda tool to target individuals and institutions. Misinformation and fake news disturb social harmony. Personal attacks on individuals through trolling and cyberbullying on social media are the worst thing that can happen to anybody in the digital space. Individual privacy is at stake, and anything on social media goes viral within seconds. This sometimes brings trauma and affects the psychological and mental health of social media users. There is always a threat to personal data. Hackers are very active on social media. Social media is an addiction for some users. In particular, youths spend hours scrolling social media platforms, leading to social isolation, stress, decreased productivity, etc.

### **1.6.2 How Social Media Affects Professional Context?**

If you are applying for a job, they will undoubtedly ask you about your online profile on LinkedIn. LinkedIn is a social networking site designed for professionals. Now, recruiters want to view your online profile for a background check. Your LinkedIn profile is your digital identity. You are missing something even if you have a strong CV, but are not present on social media. The same happens with businesses. From startups to big corporations, everyone makes their online presence felt before their clients, customers, and partners. Organisations are using social media platforms for internal and external communication purposes. Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and Google Meet are some platforms that help professionals remain connected. Social media provides ample opportunities for professionals to grow their network with other professionals from the same industry. It also helps them connect with industry veterans to stay informed about industry trends. Marketing professionals can leverage social media with a low-cost budget to reach mass customers and niche markets and create awareness about their products and services. Companies are also providing online sales and service support to their customers and getting online product feedback. This instant connection between clients and service providers creates a positive relationship.

Social media helps workers develop a healthy working relationship. Social media can also provide an opportunity to develop personal skills by expanding one's knowledge of domain areas. If you want to start a small business to sell your product, Facebook and Instagram are the best platforms to reach your target audience. By leveraging social media, these small businesses also build their brands and regularly interact with their followers. However, social media may have a negative impact on the professional life of a human being. As a business professional, you must constantly update your social media page content. Users want attractive and fresh content every day. When a professional uses too much social media during work hours, productivity will decrease. A single negative comment can destroy the reputation of an organisation that has been built over a long period of time.

Sometimes, co-workers' use of social media can create jealousy and envy among them. Maintaining a balance while using social media for personal and professional purposes is always advisable. Social media is a powerful tool, but we should use it ethically and responsibly so that our personal and professional life goals cannot be hampered.

---

## 1.7 DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

---

Disruptive technology is one type of technology that disrupts existing and established businesses or industries' operations through a new process or system. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, disruptive technology is a new technology that completely changes how things are done. A disruptive technology overturns a traditional business model, which makes it much harder for an established firm to embrace it. It was in the early 90s that Clayton Christensen, a Harvard Professor, coined the term 'disruptive innovation' and developed the Disruptive Innovation Theory. By disruptive innovation, he meant the new entrant that disrupts the already established businesses. Social media is a disruptive technology that has altered every business in this era. Social media has created new business and revenue models that are impactful and tap into areas that others have not reached. Social media has restructured the way traditional industries do their business. Starting from interacting with customers, the product and service delivery system has been entirely changed. Let us discuss how social media has disrupted various traditional industries in our time.

### 1.7.1 Traditional Media Industry

Traditional media houses, both print and electronic, have entirely revamped their operation after the invention of social media. Social media has changed how news is written and distributed to readers, listeners, and audiences. Users get real-time updates through social media platforms like X, LinkedIn and Facebook. The concept of citizen journalism has brought a voice to the voiceless. Now, any news consumer can be a producer and distributor of news using social media as a channel. It has given space to broadcast and publish those voices which were not heard. Unlike traditional media houses, it has given power to the common masses to influence the media in how they want it to react and cover news stories. In this digital era, almost all media outlets are on the most popular social media platforms. Film lovers prefer to watch movies on OTT platforms rather than in movie halls. The entertainment industry, too, has been impacted by social media innovation. Social media empowers users to produce and consume various entertainment-based content. YouTube, Instagram, and Snapchat are our daily entertainment sources.

### 1.7.2 Education and Employment Industry

Unlike traditional classroom teaching, social media platforms like YouTube, LinkedIn Learning, Discord and others have created virtual classrooms for learners. Livestream lectures and online classes are helping students access professors' classes that were unavailable earlier. On the other hand, it also helps the faculty community prepare their materials through Pinterest boards and other digital boards to organise resources, worksheets, and lesson plans.

AI-supported tools are helping the student community to prepare their study materials. Everyone needs a job after completing their studies. Job seekers must look for recruiters' advertisements posted in newspapers, on boards, or in employment exchange offices. Networking and professional sites such as LinkedIn and X post regular updates on various industries' recruitment options. They must have their profile on these platforms to connect with recruiters and see regular job postings. Online recruitment is a faster and more efficient way to employ suitable candidates.

### **1.7.3 Healthcare Industry**

Being an essential industry, the healthcare sector has seen a massive disruption after social media intervention. It has impacted the healthcare industry both positively and negatively. The healthcare industry has integrated various digital technologies to provide enhanced healthcare facilities. Patients also use social media platforms to get information about their health issues. The COVID-19 pandemic has especially compelled us to use social media to learn about basic treatments. The healthcare industry has revamped itself and now extends online consultations to patients. Even doctors share video tutorials on common diseases, precautions, generic medicines and home remedies. At the same time, social media platforms are full of false information on diseases, medicines, and treatments. Disruptive interference in the healthcare sector shapes patient care and patient experience in getting treatments. Hospitals are providing live video discussions with reputed surgeons. During the pandemic, we have seen many forwarded false messages shared through WhatsApp, Facebook and other sites. These are creating challenges for the industry itself.

### **1.7.4 Retail, Manufacturing, Customer Service Industry**

The introduction of social media in the retail industry has entirely changed how customers interact with retailers. Instant customer engagement occurs through instant feedback and solutions from retailers and company executives. Social media platforms have integrated e-commerce features. This trend has given customers a new shopping experience. Instagram and Facebook are the new shopping sites for social media users. The manufacturing industry has seen a revamp in the digital era. Customers can directly connect with the manufacturers, which was impossible earlier. We can directly order, share our experience and enquire about our products from the manufacturers through their social media pages. Earlier, the customer care service industry was entirely dependent on call centres. However, with AI support, customers can now get live support to address their issues. To manage their brand reputation, companies are available 24/7 on social media pages to address the grievances of loyal customers. Therefore, with the help of social media tools, they are extending quicker responses and more transparent solutions to their customers.

#### **Check Your Progress: 4**

- Note:** 1) Use the space provided below for your answers.  
2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1. Explain disruptive technology.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

2. Name two healthcare providers whose social media pages you have visited recently.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

---

## 1.8 LET US SUM UP

---

In this unit, we have discussed the evolution of social media and various types of social media with a few examples. We also learnt about social media's changes to the traditional communication model. Social media has definitely impacted global connectivity. It has brought many popular cultures and integrated with our own traditional culture. We have also thrown light on the impact of social media on personal and professional spheres. An individual's personal identity is judged by his or her online activities on various social media sites. Social media shapes our professional identity. Our fellow workers, friends, and family watch us on these platforms. Social media has disrupted traditional industries such as media, healthcare, retail, manufacturing, and many others.

---

## 1.9 KEYWORDS

---

**Disruptive Technology** disrupts the entire system, process, or industry and provides a new way of doing business or operating.

**Social Bookmarking:** Social bookmarking is a process of saving the web pages we visit on an online platform to revisit them as and when we want.

**Social Media:** Social media helps people connect, share, and create content online.

---

## 1.10 FURTHER READINGS

---

1. Boyd, D. (2014). *It's complicated: The social lives of networked teens*. Yale University Press.
2. Burges, J., Marwick, A., & Poell, T. (Eds.). (2018). *The SAGE handbook of social media*. SAGE.
3. Castells, M. (2010). *The rise of the network society: The information age: Economy, society, and culture* (Vol. 1). Wiley-Blackwell.
4. Couldry, N., & Hepp, A. (2017). *The mediated construction of reality*. Polity Press.
5. Fuchs, C. (2017). *Social media: A critical introduction* (2nd ed.). SAGE.

6. Hinton, S., & Hjorth, L. (2013). *Understanding social media*. SAGE.
7. Jenkins, H., Ford, S., & Green, J. (2013). *Spreadable media: Creating value and meaning in a networked culture*. NYU Press.
8. Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Business Horizons*, 53(1), 59–68. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003>
9. Kietzmann, J. H., Hermkens, K., McCarthy, I. P., & Silvestre, B. S. (2011). Social media? Get serious! Understanding the functional building blocks of social media. *Business Horizons*, 54(3), 241–251. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2011.01.005>
10. OECD. (2020). *The digital transformation of education: Connecting education to the digital age*. OECD Publishing. <https://www.oecd.org/education/>
11. Papacharissi, Z. (2010). *A private sphere: Democracy in a digital age*. Polity Press.
12. Persily, N., & Tucker, J. A. (Eds.). (2020). *Social media and democracy: The state of the field, prospects for reform*. Cambridge University Press.
13. van Dijck, J. (2013). *The culture of connectivity: A critical history of social media*. Oxford University Press.
14. Wilson, Y. (2019). *The social media journalist handbook*. Routledge.

---

## 1.11 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

---

### Check Your Progress: 1

1. Bulletin boards are attached to a modem and powered by computers. Users can log in, read, and post messages to one or more categories on the local servers. However, only one person at a time can dial and get access to a bulletin board.
2. A blog is a write-up where the user publishes his or her personal account on any topics of interest to a wider audience. Blog writers can post text, pictures, videos, multimedia files, infographics, etc., on their personal pages. Two photo-sharing sites are Instagram and Pinterest.

### Check Your Progress: 2

1. Reels are made on Instagram, while YouTube Shorts are made for YouTube. You can make a reel of 15 seconds to 60 seconds, while YouTube Shorts are 60 seconds.
2. Social media has transformed our communication system. The traditional communication model was totally revamped with the introduction of social media. Two-way communications have taken over the process. The sender and receiver are not different persons. Content consumers are now also creating content.

**Check Your Progress: 3**

1. Social media affects our culture in both positive and negative ways. People are adopting the culture of other societies by learning through online platforms. Now, we are exposed to a cross-cultural environment. However, simultaneously, while learning about foreign cultures, we forget our own culture. We must balance ourselves while following other cultures.

**Check Your Progress: 4**

1. Disruptive technology is a type of technology that disrupts the operations of existing and established businesses or industries through a new process or system.

