

Social networks

Business applications

Social networks connect people at low cost; this can be beneficial for entrepreneurs and small businesses looking to expand their contact base. These networks often act as a customer relationship management tool for companies selling products and services. Companies can also use social networks for advertising in the form of banners and text ads. Since businesses operate globally, social networks can make it easier to keep in touch with contacts around the world.

Medical applications

Social networks are beginning to be adopted by healthcare professionals as a means to manage institutional knowledge, disseminate peer to peer knowledge and to highlight individual physicians and institutions. The advantage of using a dedicated medical social networking site is that all the members are screened against the state licensing board list of practitioners. The role of social networks is especially of interest to pharmaceutical companies who spend approximately "32 percent of their marketing dollars" attempting to influence the opinion leaders of social networks.

Languages, nationalities and academia

Various social networking sites have sprung up catering to different languages and countries. The popular site Facebook has been cloned for various countries and languages and some specializing in connecting students and faculty.

Social networks for social good

Several websites are beginning to tap into the power of the social networking model for social good. Such models may be highly successful for connecting otherwise fragmented industries and small organizations without the resources to reach a broader audience with interested and passionate users. Users benefit by interacting with a like-minded community and finding a channel for their energy and giving.

Business model

Few social networks currently charge money for membership. In part, this may be because social networking is a relatively new service, and the value of using them has not been firmly established in customers' minds. Companies such as MySpace and Facebook sell online advertising on their site. Hence, they are seeking large memberships, and charging for membership would be counter productive. Some believe that the deeper information that the sites have on each user will allow much better targeted advertising than any other site can currently provide. Sites are also seeking other ways to make money, such as by creating an online marketplace or by selling professional information and social connections to businesses.

Privacy issues

On large social networking services, there have been growing concerns about users giving out too much personal information and the threat of sexual predators. Users of these services need to be aware of data theft or viruses. However, large services, such as MySpace, often work with law enforcement to try to prevent such incidents. In addition, there is a perceived privacy threat in relation to placing too much personal information in the hands of large corporations or governmental bodies, allowing a profile to be produced on an individual's behavior on which decisions, detrimental to an individual, may be taken.

Investigations

Social network services are increasingly being used in legal and criminal investigations. Information posted on sites such as MySpace and Facebook, has been used by police, probation, and university officials to prosecute users of said sites. In some situations, content posted on MySpace has been used in court.

1 According to the text, social networks....

- are being used by businesses for marketing.
- are about friendships.
- can damage business reputations.
- advertise on business web sites.

2 Why do advertisers like social network sites?

- Detailed information on each user allows targeted ads.
- They are cost-effective to advertise on.
- Most users have high disposable income.
- They can influence consumer behaviour.

3 What does the word 'Few' at the beginning of paragraph 6 mean?

- Hardly any
- Not any
- Some
- Only

4 What should users not do on social networks?

- be too free with their personal information
- download viruses
- contact predators
- upload copyrighted music

5 Personal information on social network sites

- can be used in court
- gives a good description of the user's personality
- is sold to the government
- is translated into many languages

6 Social networking is great for

- groups of people separated over wide areas
- academic organisations
- people who write too much information about themselves
- the law enforcement agencies



You are going to read an article about the making of an unusual television commercial. Six sentences have been removed from the article. Choose from the sentences A-G the one which fits each gap. There is one extra sentence which you do not need to use.

- A** Then the falling dominoes head out of the room into the streets, causing progressively larger objects to tumble.
- B** These were all chosen to suit the town and fit in with the people's way of life.
- C** Getting there involved driving along 48 kilometres of dirt roads and crossing twelve rivers.
- D** Iruya is situated 3000 metres above sea level and the film crew was not used to working in such conditions.
- E** The prop department did construct a small version on site, but most of the work was done in a studio in London.
- F** Added to this was the total of one hundred and thirty 'actors' who were recruited from a five neighbouring towns.
- G** Not so with the famous Irish drink company Guinness.

The Making of 'Tipping Point'

Many of the most expensive commercials ever made are those in which an A-list celebrity flashes a beautiful smile at the cameras. Their recent television advertisement, the most expensive in British history, cost ten million pounds, and it features, not the rich and famous, but villagers from the mountains of Argentina.

The advertisement features a game of dominoes. It begins in a darkened room where several thousand ordinary dominoes are set up on a specially-designed table. Dominoes knock over books, which in turn knock bigger household objects such as suitcases, tyres, pots of paint, oil drums and even cars. The final piece in the chain reaction is a huge tower of books. These flutter open to reveal a structure in the shape of a pint of Guinness.

The location chosen for the commercial was Iruya, a village high up in the mountains of north-west Argentina. The journey there could take up to ten hours. Asked why this remote destination was chosen for the shoot, the director said that even though it was the most difficult location they could have picked, it was perfect.

For one month, the village, population thousand, increased in size by almost thirty percent. One hundred and forty crew members descended on the village. These included the world record holders in domino toppling, Weijers Domino productions from the Netherlands.

Creating this film was no easy task. Preparations for filming took well over a month. Twenty six truckloads of objects were brought in. They included 10,000 books, 400 tyres, 75 mirrors, 50 fridges, 45 wardrobes and 6 cars. Setting the objects up took skill and patience. They needed to be arranged so they would fall over easily, and this involved balancing them on stones. Some of the sequences had to be reshot 15 times and 24 hours of footage was captured. However, the sequence in which six cars fell over was successfully shot in just one take.

Filming in this location was not without its difficulties. Firstly, being so isolated, it was hard to obtain resources at short notice. The second problem was the high altitude. It was also hard working with the villagers who had no experience of film-making. Finally, setting and resetting the props caused a good deal of frustration.

Director Nicolai Fuglsig said about the project : 'Despite all the challenges, the cast was fantastic and it was a really amazing experience.' Whether or not the effort put into the advert pays off is another matter entirely.

You are going to read an article in which four people comment on a book they have read recently. For questions 1-10, choose from the people A-D. The people may be chosen more than once.

A.Kerry:

I really don't know why this book is so popular. I mean, I suppose it is going to appeal to young girls who want danger and romance, but I found this book really tedious. For a start, the characters were really unconvincing. The author went out of her way to add lots of details about the characters, but I found these details really pointless. I thought that some of the facts she presented about the main characters would become significant in some way later in the novel, but they didn't. They were just worthless bits of information. I also was disappointed that, although this book is meant to be about kids at high school, the writer seems to have no recollection at all about what it's like to be 17. The main character thought and acted like a 32-year old. It just wasn't believable. I'm not saying Teresa Wilson is a bad writer. She can obviously string words together and come up with a story that is appealing to a large number of people, but she lacks anything original. There is no flair. It just uses the same sort of language as you can see in many other mediocre novels.

B.Liz:

I have to say that I won't forget this book for a long time. I was hooked from the very first chapter. The devastating story affected me so much that I don't know if I'll ever feel the same again. I was close to tears on several occasions. I've got images in my brain now that I don't think will ever leave me. It's incredibly well-researched and, although it is fiction, is based on shocking real-life events. I learned an awful lot about things that went on that I never knew before. Margaret Emerson has a brilliant way with words and I really felt real empathy towards the characters, although I was sometimes irritated by the choices they made. However, the parallel story, the part that is set in the present, is not quite so good. I found myself just flicking through that part so that I could get back to 1940s Paris.

C.Imogen:

This is a delightful novel full of wonderful imagery, it paints a remarkable picture of life in a distant time and a far-away place. If you're looking to learn about Eastern culture in great detail, then this is probably not the book for you, as the writer skims over most of the more complicated aspects of the country's etiquette. The historical aspects are also not covered in much depth. However, I wonder whether this was the writer's intention. By doing this, he symbolises the superficiality of the girl's life. She, like the book, is beautiful and eager to please, but remains too distant from us, the readers, to teach us much. Although I loved the book and read it in one sitting, the ending was a bit of a disappointment. A story which involves so much turmoil, in a place where the future is uncertain, should not have a happy-ever-after fairy-tale ending.

D.Hannah:

I read this book for a literature class. I know it's a classic, and I did try to like it, but I just didn't get into it. I kept persevering, hoping that I'd start to enjoy it, but no such luck. The famous scene out on the moors was definitely the best bit of the book, but even that I found ridiculous when it is clearly supposed to be passionate. As I approached the end of the book, I figured there must be some kind of moral to the story, something that I would learn from the experience of trudging through seven hundred long pages, but there was nothing worthwhile. I don't know why the literary world sees this book as such a masterpiece. The characters are portrayed as being intelligent, but they do such stupid things! And as for it being a *love* story - marrying someone you don't love and then being abused by them - that doesn't spell love to me.

Which person read a book which...

1. was set in an Oriental country
2. finished in an unrealistic way
3. had characters that the reader could sympathise with
4. is well-known and was written a long time ago
5. contained two stories
6. was not set in the past
7. was historically accurate
8. made the reader cry
9. contained insignificant details
10. has a well-known scene

Reading
is for
Everyone!