

# **Digital Detoxification: A Content Analysis of User Generated Videos Uploaded on YouTube by Facebook Quitters**

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Social media has not only transformed an individual's interaction pattern but has also integrated into wide range of interests and practices of online users. This social network facilitates self construction, identity performance and social integration on one hand while mediating fake relationships, unethical practices and invading privacy on the other. This study aims to understand why some Facebook users are quitting this online platform. Content analyses of YouTube videos of those who claim to be Facebook quitters have been analyzed to conceptualize emerging themes. This will be a study inclusive to interpretative paradigm to understand the reasons leading to this digital detoxification and enthusiastic non-Facebook experience. The present study extends this line of research to assess the range of identity claims that users tend to make for constructing online self-identity on Facebook and to investigate how it has affected the decision to quit. Implications and future research directions of digital detoxification by quitting Facebook are discussed.

**Keywords:** Digital detoxification, content analysis, Facebook, self-disclosure

Today, Internet has integrated into our daily lives and has become a manufactured need for human being. It has created a platform for human socializing supported by social network sites (SNSs) such as Facebook, MySpace where technology enabled tools cater to audience of similar or differentiated interest. Social network sites offer new tools for both, relationship building and maintaining and thus are highly relevant to psychological well-being of an individual. It is evident that users are deriving variety of benefits and gratifications from usage of SNSs, that includes gratification from content generation, building social capital, browsing, communication and surveillance at large. Such social connection gratification tends to increased frequency of usage and content gratifications leading to high adhesiveness to the site (Joinson, 2008). On contrary, leading scholars (Hampton & Wellman, 2002) have emphasized on the exceeding role of Internet as local media than global media in friendship making and community building. "Internet is less effective than other means of forming and sustaining strong social relationships" (Cummings et al. 2002, p. 108).

Over the past few years, the trends show that Facebook users have started quitting their Facebook account and switched to other SNSs on online platform. In 2013, Stefan Stieger and his team investigated attributes concerning Facebook users and quitters and

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found that privacy concerns, Internet addiction scores, and personality were considered as main attributes for Facebook quitting. Results showed higher privacy concerns, higher internet addiction score and higher conscientious level of Facebook quitters. It was claimed that main reason for committing virtual identity suicide was privacy concerns. Another recent study (Steinger et al., 2013) on counter-movement Quit Facebook day of users, found that few reasons mainly privacy concern, dissatisfaction with Facebook, negative aspects of online friends and Facebook addiction are the key concerns for virtual identity suicide. Few of these studies contributed to prior work on Facebook quitters and intricate emerging trends in this shift on online space.

The present study will reflect on emerging themes and develop a conceptual framework for the major reasons why young people are leaving this social network. An important reason for conducting this study is to assist researchers in developing qualitative studies in future for Facebook quitters. It will further help to develop strategies for confronting issues concerning accessibility, reliability, authenticity and validity as well as information overload on Facebook. It extends this line of research to understand how usage of SNSs affected decision to quit Facebook, exploring user's identity constructions on Facebook and their identity claims in a non-anonymous online setting. This qualitative study will contribute in two ways. Firstly, to understand the importance of media literacy and secondly, to explore innovative ways to engage young people in contrast to SNSs for bringing significant transformation in youth life worlds and experiences.

## Literature Review

Ellison (2007) defined social network sites 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 connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.” Literature on SNSs users' reveal that researchers have explored social network sites abundantly while little focus has been given to explore the negative aspects of SNSs. Few researchers (Stieger, et al.,2013; Baumer, et al.,2013) studied this phenomenon to explore important issues related to committing virtual identity suicide and to distinguish SNSs users and non-users. Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) ascertained ineffective understanding of social media and its usage in various forms as one of the reason for inadequate research in this field.

Considering the proliferation of computer-mediated communication in our society, it may seem unsurprising that many teens and young adults are using these technologies daily, documenting through words, pictures, and videos the moments of their daily lives, from the awesome (e.g., graduations) to the mundane (e.g., lunch). Recent study shows that 73% of American adults engage in some type of social networking, and the list of popular SNSs is increasing to serve this purpose (Duggan & Smith, 2014). In addition, it has stimulated communication scholars to study Social networking sites, such as Facebook, primarily to understand the dynamics of online impression management, online engagement and relationship seeking behavior among users (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Tong et al., 2008; Zhao, Grasmuck, & Martin, 2008). Relationships created and maintained in such online environment have generated subjects of various research interests.

In fact, Facebook is the world's most popular online social network. With the emergence and the success of such networks, a significant part of people's social life has relocated to an online context. St. John (2006) argued that this generation willingly share his/her live details on social media and this activity of regular registration of activities has created an online intimate digital library of users which is easily accessible via a

single click (Schweitzer, 2014). Unfortunately, creating this intimate digital library sometimes leads to oversharing, which is potentially problematic from both a social and legal perspective. From a social perspective, people may judge information shared by over-sharers as inappropriate to share (Winzenburg, 2012) and this might create distance between the sharer and observer. From a legal perspective, “oversharing” via social media has become a legal hot topic, and judges are trying to make decisions about these cases within the larger landscape of Internet law (Boyden, 2012). So considering these potential pitfalls, why are people sharing so much? In their review of the Facebook usage studies, Nadkarni and Hofmann (2012) found that many people used Facebook to satisfy their needs for belonging and self-presentation. Therefore, the pictures and status updates are fulfilling social needs to connect with others, gain acceptance, and present an online version of oneself, either accurate or idealized (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012).

Ken Hillis (2009) emphasized that online avatar as a Facebook profile is distinct from actual identity of a user and lies somewhere in between representative and its image. Since online platform enhances ability of a user to control his/her self-presentation and thus, higher opportunities for customizing self-presentation which is different from real self (Cornwell & Lundgren, 2001). Leary (1996) observes that “Self-presentation and impression management are conscious attempts to control behaviors to make a desired impression on a particular audience by employing various self-presentation tactics.” Online activities on SNSs like Facebook comprises primarily of non-interactive consumption of available content and generating content in the process as well. This strongly influences non-interactive behavior and finally leads to loneliness and reduced social capital (Burke, Marlow, & Lento, 2010). Furthermore, the majority of the activities engaged in have rather negative outcomes for some of its users due to active or passive consumption of people’s information (Krasnova et al., 2013). Although Facebook is an excellent tool for social networking such as connecting with acquaintances, there are serious shortcomings of using it such as lowered life satisfaction (Krasnov et al., 2013), reduced satisfaction of basic psychological needs and dampened mood. Probably, these concerns have led to inception of a counter movement to quit online social life by committing virtual identity suicide.

Although online social networks like Facebook have become a popular subject of psychological research, many of its psychological underpinnings and consequences have not been investigated yet. This research is an attempt to understand how Facebook quitting affects an individual and fundamental effect of Facebook use on subjective well-being.

## **Research Objectives and Questions**

This paper aims at exploring the reasons for quitting Facebook, how quitting Facebook benefits an individual and their experience after leaving online platform. The approach will be from a psychological and behavioral perspective to understand reasons behind Facebook quitting based on content analysis of the 10 YouTube videos uploaded by young people between 20-30 years of age and those who claim to be Facebook quitters. As the purpose of the study is to understand factors that influenced online users to quit Facebook- this research was set the following questions:

- (i) What kind of interpretative discourses quitters construct in their videos uploaded on YouTube?
- (ii) What kind of discourse around representation of self-emerges out of the videos of Facebook quitters?

## Methodology

Sample of YouTube videos are selected based on convenient sampling and proper gender representation has been maintained to study 10 videos on YouTube by those who claim to quit/delete their Facebook account. To study this, qualitative content analysis is used to analyse the process using following steps, including formulating the research questions to be answered based on problem statement, selective approach to choose the sample of videos to be analyzed based on its availability, proliferation of categories and defining it based on key words, outlining the coding process and implementing the coding process to identify emerging themes, determining trustworthiness and analyzing the key themes. In the coding process, researcher used content analysis to create or develop a coding scheme to guide coders to make decisions in the analysis of content. During the entire process, good coding scheme is ensured using content analysis to sustain trustworthiness in research (Folger, Hewes, & Poole, 1984).

## Analysis

Qualitative content analysis of YouTube videos based on inductive analysis approach has taken into consideration. The content analysis has incorporated in below mentioned steps.

- Step 1 : This step involves defining the content which is being studied. Here, the author is studying reasons for quitting Facebook therefore for this purpose YouTube videos are chosen and selected based on convenient sampling.
- Step 2 : This step decides the key themes. In this stage the authors have analyzed the audio content and captured key words based on a few parameters. Analysis of parameters include,
- (i) Adjectives used in the description which gives a strong indication of a speaker's attitude towards the issue.
  - (ii) Metaphors used in the videos.
  - (iii) Viewpoint of the narrator specifically on quitting issue.

After considering above mentioned parameters, the author has generated in total seven themes which broadly showcase the reasons for quitting Facebook by online users.

- Step 3 : To establish means to ongoing content analysis, the author has followed "repeat regularly" approach. In this approach, author repeated the content analysis process using said parameters for three times, which gave a thorough understanding of all the themes. Apart from it, repeat regularly approach has helped in increasing the trustworthiness of the research.

## Results

Qualitative content analysis of YouTube videos based on inductive analysis approach has taken into consideration. It was found that seven different interpretative themes evolving from the video transcriptions: (i) Self-disclosure, (ii) Blurred public and private selves, (iii) Power to break relationships, (iv) Internet addiction, (v) Negative self-concept, (vi) Self-disclosure as marketable commodity, and (vii) Shift to available alternatives are key emerging themes. In the following sub-section the emerged themes have been illustrated.

## Self-Disclosure/Impression Construction

Facebook quitters claim that people on Facebook are different from real life. Facebook enables meaningful relationships but there exists fake representation of real self. This quest for fake identity and impression management for seeking affinity leads to superficial online relations. The statement like *“mainly people I see, especially girls if I am being completely honest try to make FB profile not the person they are but rather the person they want people to see them as...”* This shows huge gap between representation of online and real self. It can be seen that only positive emotions are stimulated by users as they have the control to selectively portray themselves in online platform. This provides an opportunity to create enhanced self-image by withholding information and negative emotions. Previous studies has captured phenomenon on internet communication that enabled self-discourse due to its anonymous nature (Derlega et al., 1993) and idealization of the other in the absence of information contrary (Murray et al, 1996). Anonymous online worlds foster idealization of self and representation of “possible self” i.e. an identity unknown to others

## Blurred Public and Private Selves

Emphasis on challenges to private life from Facebook can be observed from many videos. One of the male quitters said “I want to keep my life more personal.” Another user said “it’s a Privacy invasion. People voluntarily give sensitive information. You can get easy access to their identity.”

Facebook quitters feel that online self diminishes the demarcation between private and public selves. Facebook treats and affects the concept the *public* and the *private* i.e. Facebook has changed their perceptions on what it means to be public and private. There is thin line between interpersonal relations and social identity. One can see in the statements like *“magical world of Facebook – not good kind”* that shows the dilemma of Facebook world which may or may not be kind to online users.

## Power to Destroy Relationships

Facebook provides a platform to maintain previous connections while keeping high aspirations for new relationships and experiences. Analysis of videos revealed that Facebook quitters felt disempowered as they allowed machines to decide on their personal and social relationships and in the process forgot to nurture relations in person or over a phone call. An interesting phenomenon shows that how relationships have gone behind the screen like birthday, new jobs, marriage, death and many more. Occasions that were celebrated together are now greeted over Facebook page rather than in person. One of the Facebook quitters complained about his emotional instability when his brother wished her Christmas over text rather than in person. It shows that Facebook as a platform is depriving us from small yet important moments of life that bring happiness. Also, Infidelity on Internet has become a norm. “Cyber Infidelity occurs when a partner in a committed relationship uses the computer or the Internet to violate promises concerning sexual exclusiveness” (Maheu, 2002). This leads to faked multiple relations with no loyalty and weakens emotional bond among people.

Another user finds how communication in Facebook leads to misinterpretation, affecting relations. He says “people will misunderstand or misinterpret since they don’t know what u really meant”. One male quitter says Social media has disconnected us, it has made us less human and more robotic. We are not going to be happy by more in online.”

## Internet Addiction/Meaningless Interaction

Through statements like “lot of new ways of garbage, big waste of time, I really want to manage my time better, I will take my time as my own business”, many Facebook quitters express why they find this platform meaningless. Another quitter expressed anger over the new ways of wasting time and irrelevance in the Facebook “If you know someone and if you don’t add them into your friends’ list, it is considered as a sort of rude.”It adds into new ways of irrelevance.

Facebook quitters feels irrelevance in spending hours over chatting with friends, browsing profiles of other users randomly that habituated users to constantly update ,comment or change status on Facebook. This had aftermath on employees’ attention and efficiency at work place and refrained students from academic achievement. Motives like only passing time, entertainment, and communication were found to be the predictors of Facebook addiction. It depicts phenomenon where Facebook is making people unproductive as in one of the video it is said “*Facebook is damn devil- distracting, unproductive*”. In this analysis, one of the female quitter highlighted “ *using day and night, more than 3000 friends, respond to, keep up with, felt noise and its constant in my life...*”The meaning and irrelevant constant communication is making people quit this and substitute with better things online or offline.

## Negativity Bias/Negative Self-Concept

Facebook quitters claim that one of the reasons for quitting is to avoid negativity prevailing in daily routine. “Feeling of jealousy, more friends but no emotional attachment, nosy & judgmental comments..” leading to anxiety that continues while working on portrayal of preferred impression. Bad impressions and bad stereotypes are quicker to form and more resistant to disconfirmation than good ones. Although people with low self-esteem considered Facebook an appealing venue for self-disclosure, the low positivity and high negativity of their disclosures elicited undesirable responses from other people (Forest & wood, 2012). The need for quitting urged to turn off overflow of negativity affecting life on routine.

## Self-Disclosure as Marketable Commodity

Facebook quitters stress that one of the reason for quitting from online platform is due to users’ disclosure of own self for gratification while the information is used by Facebook for advertising purposes. “*people advertise...people want them to believe about themselves*” shows that the ostentatious lifestyle is allowing marketers to persuade your needs based on hidden desires that are bottled up in online platform.

Cultural theorist Henry Jenkins (2006) emphasizes on a definite paradigm shift in the way media content is produced and circulated due to advent of web 2.0 applications. Today, presumption corresponds to companies’ competitive struggle whereby consumers are involved in the process of knowledge exploration, innovation and value creation (Ziemba, 2011). Presumption makes it possible for consumers to engage in product or service development by contributing their knowledge and ideas as well as through collaboration with others (Arvidsson, 2007). Such consumers are defined as prosumers.

## Shift to Available Alternatives

Facebook quitters irritated by superficial interactions and dissatisfaction have switched to alternative options for entertainment and passing time. Uses of networking sites like

Google plus, Instagram, Twitter are preferred for creative information rather than same status on Facebook. Facebook quitters are looking forward for self discovery through traveling, music, Yoga etc to connect to own self. The usage of term like “*digital detoxify*” is a remarkable phenomenon to be considered for better usage of time and resources. Many Facebook users mention in their videos about the online platforms they prefer in order to substitute Facebook. One female quitter says “people ask how you contact people? How do you share pictures? I have email, Twitter, Tumbler and stuff. I don’t have Facebook account and I feel perfectly comfortable with that.” One male user finds an alternative in offline “I want to organize a live event to meet each other. Church is a main way to come together.” This phenomenon is prevailing to switch off from pretentious and pessimist life towards a better way of living.

## Discussion

The criteria for selection used in this study is sufficiently exhaustive to account for diversity in content and reliable enough to obtain comparable results. The data from ten different YouTube videos has been obtained to cover all relevant aspects of the Facebook quitting. A brief discussion of analysis approaches is outlined, content analysed to discover the practical understandings of meanings and actions. The coding frames are used to organise the data and identify findings as discussed in methodology section. After completing the sorting of key terminologies, the emerging themes are interpreted from detailed organisational patterns of articles. The sociological constructs and theoretical considerations led to analysis of content and has helped determine the concepts and categories that fits the YouTube video content analysis.

The findings reflect common emerging themes in the 10 videos that has been studied. Self-disclosure, blurred public & private selves, power to break relationships, Internet addiction, Negative self concept, Self disclosure as marketable commodity and alternatives to Facebook are key emerging themes. This is a rudimentary study to bring such themes on Facebook quitting and further with the involvement of post quitting behavior can be involved to enrich the content and implications of the analysis. In light of the mentioned aftermath of Facebook, it is suggested to move virtual close relationships slowly into real life social networks of family and friends and ensure relationship grounded on shared interests, goals and values.

The human experience or engagement with new technologies is inseparable from the various agencies or players, who shape, define or inform his or her subjective and social reality. The connection that we are making here is that about the representative nature of our sample size that is used for this study and its limits to presenting a holistic picture about the human experience or engagement with new communication technologies. Here we have more specifically analysed Facebook, a popular virtual platform enabled by new ICTs to facilitate the social networking in the virtual world. Our sample includes only men and women from the Western world, evident from their physical features and mentioning on their whereabouts by few participants in the uploaded videos. Most of them were white skinned. The all Facebook quitters in discussion have sound command over the English language. It suggests into their sound social and cultural capital. So the remaining question is that whether the same reasons force a person in the Sub Saharan Africa to quit the Facebook. In short, in future, if this study can follow the post modernist critique of universal reality and its acknowledgement of multiple realities, it can help to present the nuances in human interaction with new information and communication technologies other than passing sweeping generalizations.

Continuing connections between the offline understandings and online behavior, it appears that themes emerged from this study based on the Facebook quitters justification to why they did so is well connected to some of the understandings and values of western society, like what Max Weber said about how protestant Christianity's values like importance given to time, helped for the industrial revolution and what Germany Bentham descriptions on utilitarianism.

In the videos used for this study, utilitarian views and concerns or regrets about the improper use of time emerge as a major reason to justify the quitting from Facebook. Statements like "lot of new ways of garbage, big waste of time, I really want to manage my time better, I will take my time as my own business" heard across the video marks it. In short, all these shows that offline understanding of a community is getting extended in online behavior.

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