

# **Lesson 7 – The Social Dilemma**

# Lesson 7. The Social Dilemma

## Learning Objectives

**After this lesson, students will be able to:**

- Describe how various social media platform are utilized.
- Determine what the social dilemma is.
- Justify a stand on a social media-related issue.
- Define vocabulary from an audio using context clues.
- Interpret and explain the contents of infographics.
- Provide recommendations to better manage social media use.
- Identify and correct errors found in sentences.

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## The Social Media War

What do you consider to be the top 5 social media platform used in your country?

Top Five SMP	Features	Users	What User Post
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

Now watch the video [\(55\) Most Popular Social Media Platforms 1997 - 2020 – YouTube](#) . Discuss with your teacher the trend of the most popular social media platforms from late 90's to 2020.

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## In a nutshell

The advancement of smart phone technology in such a short time is certainly impressive, for example. However, the impact of social media, while intertwined with the smart phone is something that made even more of an impression. A powerful exploration of the extreme impact that a relatively small number of engineers in Silicon Valley have over modern-day society, *The Social Dilemma* deftly tackles concepts like technology addiction, social engineering, and surveillance capitalism and makes them visceral, understandable, and urgent.

**“If the service is free, then you are the product”**

How do you understand the adage from the trending Netflix documentary?

Sources: [The Social Dilemma \(humanetech.com\)](https://www.humanetech.com/) [The Impact of Social Media in Our Daily Lives \(linguagreca.com\)](https://www.linguagreca.com/)

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**Debate:** Is it possible to live our normal lives without social media?

## Points to consider:

- Are you a unicorn among millennials?
- Do employers make you use social media?
- Where do you get your news?
- How do you kill time?
- Are you more efficient without a social media account?
- Is there a downside in being a working professional in your part of the world and not being on social media?
- What are the means of communication you use with the people in your life?

*Sources:*

[What It's Like to Live Without Social Media | Best Countries | US News](#)

[What do you learn when you live 4 months without social networks? | by Isra García | The Startup | Medium](#)

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## Keen Listening

Take notice of the following vocabulary in the audio. Talk about your comprehension of each if you are familiar with them. While listening, jot down notes on how the each vocabulary is defined, used and connected to topic presented.

millennial

baby boomer

digital addiction  
crisis

obsession

cravings

serve and return  
movements

assurance and  
connection

depression

exacerbated

vicious cycle

intervention

grayscale

notification

Identify what part of speech each  
vocabulary is.

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## Listening (7.1) *Tech Addiction*

[https://6a63fca904fd268f15f7-d5770ffdd579eb31eaa89faeffc55fe7.ssl.cf1.rackcdn.com/LE\\_listening\\_C1\\_Tech\\_addiction.mp3](https://6a63fca904fd268f15f7-d5770ffdd579eb31eaa89faeffc55fe7.ssl.cf1.rackcdn.com/LE_listening_C1_Tech_addiction.mp3)

1. Describe how the sound of people hanging out has changed over the years.
2. Discuss how teens and adults spend their time on smart phones.
3. What is the purpose of the non-profit organization *Center for Humane Technology*?
4. How is the word addiction defined in the audio? Give examples.
5. What is the possible effect of giving a crying child a phone to distract them instead of talking to or hugging them?
6. Why is the tech addiction described as a vicious cycle?

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Study and discuss the graphs below.

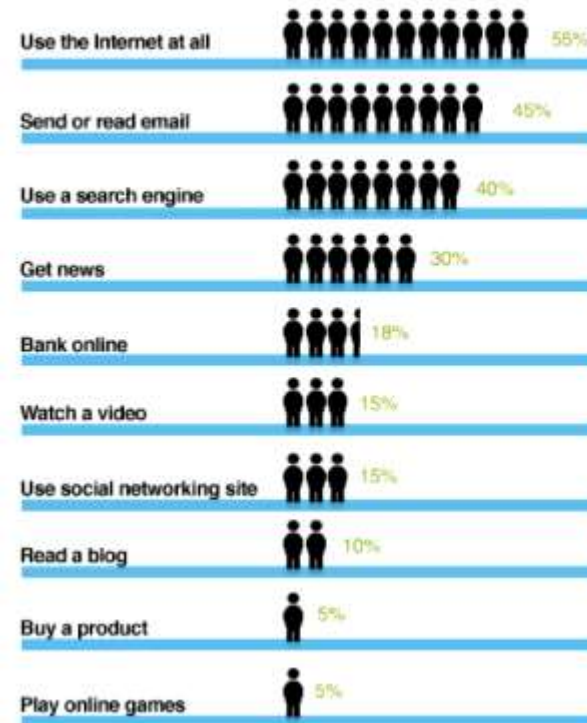
## Total Time Spent Worldwide

As a percentage of total internet hours spent by all users:



## Daily Internet Activities

Percentage of American adults (including non-internet users) who do the following every day: = 5%



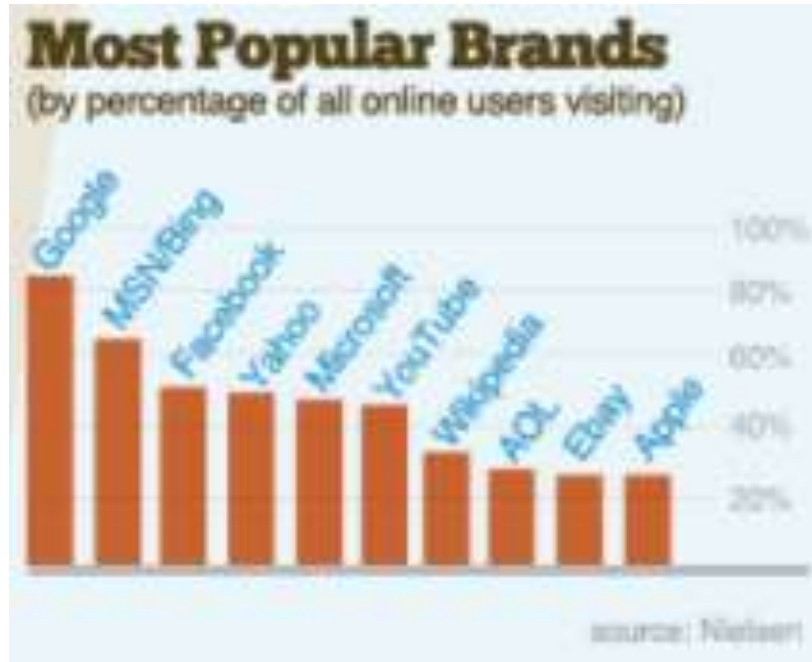
source: Pew

Source: [How The World Spends Its Time Online \[INFOGRAPHIC\] \(techinasia.com\)](http://How The World Spends Its Time Online [INFOGRAPHIC] (techinasia.com))



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Study and discuss the graphs below.



Source: [How The World Spends Its Time Online \[INFOGRAPHIC\] \(techinasia.com\)](http://techinasia.com)

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## Preview Questions:

1. Which websites do you use the most? What do you like most about them?
2. What social networking platforms do you use? Why do you use them?
3. Do you make an effort to limit your screen time? Why or why not?
4. What social movements do you know that have been popularized by social media?

## Reading:

*The Social Dilemma* is a video documentary that argues that social media companies are causing significant damage to society. The video is mostly presented by insiders in the tech industry (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, etc.) who confess to the **insidious** nature of the technology they helped design.

*“If you’re not paying for the product, then you’re the product.”*

The film begins by **rebutting** the claim that social media is free. By using the system, the user and his attention *become the product* that advertisers aim to control. Although we fear these companies sell our data, social media companies **hoard** it to in order to *monetize us*. The data collected is not merely demographic—every engagement is measured by algorithms with precision to better understand our behaviour. The end goal is an unconscious manipulation, which is described as a “gradual, slight, **imperceptible** change in [our]own behaviour and perception.” Harvard professor Shoshana Zuboff believes this *surveillance capitalism* has made tech companies “the richest ... in the history of humanity.”

Source: [The Social Dilemma: A Lesson on Social Media \(Advanced ESL\) \(englishcurrent.com\)](https://www.englishcurrent.com/lesson/the-social-dilemma-a-lesson-on-social-media-advanced-esl/)

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## The Mental Health Dilemma

Justin Rosenstein, creator of the Facebook Like button, believed his feature would spread positivity. Such features provide us with a **dosage** of social approval, which we tend to **conflate** with acceptance and truth. Sadly, the result is a “fake **brittle** popularity” that leaves us **vacant** and depressed without it.

A study of 100,000 teenage girls in the U.S. found that hospital admissions for self-harm have increased by 62% in older teens and 189% in pre-teens (nearly triple). The same patterns exist for teen suicide.

These changes began around 2010/2011, which **coincides** with social media becoming available on smart phones.

## The Democracy Dilemma

*“If you want to control the population of your country, there has never been a tool as effective as Facebook.”*

Social media is perhaps too efficient at reaching the most **fertile** audience for ads and campaigns. This allows bad actors such as political and hate groups to easily gain popularity and influence. Studies from MIT (2018) show that fake news spreads six times faster than true news. This leads to a **polarization** of society as newsfeeds **entrench** us deeper and deeper in our own views. As a society, we lose touch with the shared facts and reality that bond us.

The documentary uses the Flat Earth movement to exemplify how regular people can be influenced to adopt incredibly idiotic beliefs. The movement was popularized by a Youtube algorithm that recommended the video to hundreds of millions of people.

What do the film’s experts believe the future holds for society? Their earnest answers include civil war and the end of civilization due to our own wilful ignorance.

Source: [The Social Dilemma: A Lesson on Social Media \(Advanced ESL\) \(englishcurrent.com\)](https://www.englishcurrent.com/lesson/the-social-dilemma-a-lesson-on-social-media-advanced-esl/)

# Lesson 7. The Social Dilemma

## ANSWER THE QUESTIONS

1. **True or False:** The article claims that social media companies are selling our data.
2. What does Zuboff's term '*surveillance capitalism*' likely mean?
3. What can we infer about the author's view on the cause of teenage health problems?
4. Describe the "**democracy dilemma**" presented in the article in your own words.
5. Does the author imply that Flat Earthers are in fact stupid?
6. Which claims in the article do you **agree** with? Which do you disagree with?

## VOCABULARY EXERCISE

- |   |                        |
|---|------------------------|
| A. happen simultaneously  | 1. insidious (adj)     |
| B. capable of producing abundant vegetation/crops or ideas          | 2. rebut (v)           |
| C. hard but easy to shatter/break                                   | 3. hoard (v)           |
| D. empty  | 4. imperceptible (adj) |
| E. proceeding in a slow, subtle way but with harmful effects        | 5. dosage (n)          |
| F. impossible to see/notice   | 6. conflate (v)        |
| G. prove that something is false                                    | 7. brittle (adj)       |
| H. combine two or more ideas into one, often in error               | 8. vacant (j)          |
| I. establish so firmly that it is difficult to change               | 9. coincide (v)        |
| J. the size or frequency of a dose of medicine/drug                 | 10. fertile (adj)      |
| K. division into two greatly contrasting groups or sets of opinions | 11. polarization (n)   |
| L. amass and hide away valued objects                               | 12. entrench (v)       |

**Free Response:** How can social media use be better managed?

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**Discuss these recommendations presented by tech experts at the end of the documentary. Are they similar to your response from the previous page? Which could you adapt? What are each pros and cons?**

1. Recognizing the current problems and discussing them openly
2. Uninstalling apps that waste time
3. Turning off notifications
4. Using a search engine that doesn't store search history instead of Google
5. Putting more regulations on tech companies and taxing data assets to discourage companies from mining personal data
6. Fact-checking the sources of an article before you share it
7. Making an effort to read news from different points of view
8. Not allowing children to use social media until 16 years of age
9. Working out a time-budget with children about how many hours they can spend online

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Identify the errors in each sentence and modify to make it correct.

1. With social media advertising, you can have consistent sales coming up from the first day your website is live.  
A B C D

2. Facebook hosts over a quarter of the world's population, to provide advertisers with an unparalleled opportunity to reach virtually anyone and everyone.  
A B C D

3. Some, like Twitter, specializes in sharing links and short written messages.  
A B C D

4. While social media is ubiquitous in America and Europe, China and India now is leading the list of social media usage.  
A B C D

5. The question is, are we on a point where the social media organizations and their activities should be regulated for the benefit of the consumer?  
A B C D

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6. Social media is computer-based technology that facilitates the sharing of ideas, thoughts, and information from  
the building of virtual networks and communities.

A

B

C

D

7. Like the major relationship networks, these sites are invaluable for brand awareness, lead generation,  
audience engagement, and more of your other social marketing goals.

A

B

C

D

8. Consumer review networks take it one step farther by building networks around the review as a core part of  
the value they provide.

A

B

C

D

9. Whichever your needs and your goals, it's a safe bet you'll find what you're looking for somewhere on social.

A

B

C

D

10. Finding success on social media requires you to thread a number of needles together somewhat seamless.

A

B

C

D

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1. Discuss this quotation: *“Only drug dealers and software companies call their customers ‘users’”* – Edward Tufte
2. Is unconscious manipulation of the consumer any different from regular marketing and advertising?
3. Does your country have a problem with ‘fake news’? Have you experienced fake news yourself?
4. Do you feel the society you live in has become more and more polarized?
5. What is your opinion on privacy and social media?
6. [\(55\) One-Minute Review: Cloak 'Anti-Social' Radar – YouTube](#) – Watch this quick review and decide whether the app is beneficial to the society or not.
7. What are the correlations between the development of the interests of users and the websites of social media portals viewed?
8. Does the development of social media portals affect educational processes in academic institutions for the better or worse?
9. Does the new media coverage increase the objectivity of the media and information provided to the public?
10. Which of your social media accounts are you willing to be deleted for good? Which would you never contemplate to delete?



**The End**