

**To study the effect of Facebook on the increase or decrease of future users in Iran****<sup>1</sup>Fatemeh Aslanzade, <sup>2</sup>Tayebeh Jahanbazi Gojani, <sup>3</sup>Najmeh-Sadat Mortaji, <sup>4</sup>Shirzad Bakhshi Teliabi**<sup>1</sup>*Communication Sciences, Islamic Azad University, East Tehran branch, Tehran, Iran.*<sup>2</sup>*Communication Sciences, Islamic Azad University, East Tehran branch, Tehran, Iran.*<sup>3</sup>*Faculty of Management and Accounting, AllamehTabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran.*<sup>4</sup>*Social Communication Sciences, Islamic Azad University, Sciences and Research branch, Tehran, Iran.*

Fatemeh Aslanzade, Tayebeh Jahanbazi Gojani, Najmeh-Sadat Mortaji, Shirzad Bakhshi Teliabi; To study the effect of Facebook on the increase or decrease of future users in Iran.

**ABSTRACT**

**Facebook** is an online social networking service which has succeeded to attract a large number of users. The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of Facebook on the increase or decrease of future users in Iran. This was done through a survey on 360 Facebook members using the quota sampling method; information was collected through an electronic questionnaire. Data have been collected from these electronic questionnaires and then analyzed using the SPSS computer software. We discovered that there is no direct relationship between the amount of time which users spend on Facebook daily and the value of Facebook in their lives. Besides, there is a reverse relationship between using Facebook and the age range of the users. There is also no direct relationship between using Facebook at present and prediction of using Facebook in the coming year. We will begin our paper by explaining the background of Facebook and the motivations for our research. Secondly we will examine the research that has been done previously on online social networks such as Facebook. Next we will explain the method we used to conduct our survey and the results that we obtained. We will conclude with our evaluation of results and possible avenues for future research.

**Key words:** Facebook, social network, future users, Facebook in Iran.*Problem Statement:*

During recent years, universe has entered a new world named "web1" followed by "web2". Within a short time, web2 has been welcomed by cyber space users due to mutual interactive relationship.

New technologies have eliminated spatial distance and enhanced ability of people to interact with each other. Using such communication means as internet, today, human has been able to create remote communities which are accessible. Social networks are among the most influential modern communication technologies which influence the whole human life and somehow, all aspects of our individual and social life are affected by this communication technology.

We are living in networks era [7]. In this era, formation of different online social networks has introduced new communication techniques to broad social communications arena. During recent years, social network sites have turned into the most popular destinations [1][2] and just during past decades, millions of people have changed their lives by creative usage of social networks and connecting to the worldwide web. We use social networks to

become closer to our friends and family, have access to our neighbors, to our classmates at university, empowering market of products and services [7], overcome political and social limitations and even like what have seen in case of turkey, make powerful social and political trends (compatible and incompatible) and introduce our society with a new image along with new aspects.

Today, Facebook is one of the most important online networks of the world [5]. This site has been put into operation on forth of February 2004 and as has announced, within 7 years had attracted 800 million users, 50 percent of which (400 million) make daily connections to Facebook and on average, each user has 13 friends. According to Facebook website, more than 900 million topics (pages, groups, events and forums) exist in Facebook and each user on average is connected to 80 communication pages, events, and groups.

In Iran, in spite of limitations, many people are connected to Facebook. A brief look at this social network reveals many familiar names, forums and pages. Apart from social and political movements during recent two or three years which have used social networks to the purpose of informing and

**Corresponding Author**

Fatemeh Aslanzade, Communication Sciences, Islamic Azad University, East Tehran branch, Tehran, Iran.

E-mail: Aslanzade.journalist@gmail.com

promoting, small samples like PNP or radio programs carrying this name, clearly show the penetration depth of this social network into Iranian users and even influence they have on verbal and even, behavioral culture of users. This has led to many speculations, studies and measurements about how to communicate in the populated background of such virtual social network. Many scholars including Ellison et al have emphasized on function of online social networks which is supporting preexisting external relationships [3] [4] while others like Sibona and Walczak have worked on reasons behind making friends or disconnection of friendship relationships within Facebook as an online social network [10].

#### *Research Hypotheses:*

Hypotheses of this research are as follows:

1. There is a direct relationship between the extent of time users dedicate to Facebook on a daily basis and value of Facebook in their lives.
2. There is a direct relationship between using Facebook and age of users.
3. The more the user uses Facebook, it's more likely that they will use Facebook in the coming year.

#### *Research Method:*

Given the fact that objective of applied researches is developing applied knowledge on a certain area (that is, applied researches are directed to practical application of knowledge) [9]. This study is classified as an applied research.

In survey research, hoping to use data to modify or adjust current circumstances or provide reasoned plans for their improvement, researcher collects a detailed description of current situation. The most important means of collecting information is using electronic questionnaire.

#### *Population and sampling:*

The population of this research is composed of Facebook members. Through quota sampling, people are sampled out of different groups. Such sampling method uses simple or available sampling. That is if number of members in a class of a group is higher, they will also be more in sample. This method was applied due to the great number of members in Facebook. 360 Facebook members were chosen as sample and asked to answer questions of the researcher through application of electronic questionnaires.

#### *Facebook Users:*

Report of Pew research center shows that approximately 67% of internet users in USA are members of Facebook. But, studies made by this

center suggest decrease in willingness of Facebook users and users of other social networks in cyber space.

Pew research center has reported decrease in willingness of internet users to use Facebook and increase in closing user accounts on this social network due to different reasons. Two thirds of American adults using internet (approx. 67%) are also Facebook users. Therefore, Facebook is considered as the dominant social network in this country. New findings obtained from the project "Internet and American Life" by Pew research center suggest that the number of Facebook users have fluctuated significantly:

61% of online users claim that sometimes have avoided using Facebook willingly for several weeks or more in the past.

20% of online adults who currently are not using Facebook said that once they were among its users but not anymore.

8% of online adults who currently are not using Facebook are willing to join Facebook again in the future.

61% of users who have avoided Facebook for some time were asked to explain the reason behind their avoidance and they mentioned many reasons. A larger number of these people (21%) reflected that "their Avoidance of Facebook" was due to their tight work schedule or not having enough time to dedicate to this site. Others named lack of interest to the site (10%), lack of attraction as to the site's content (10%), over spreading of rumors by friends (9%) or worrying about time waste and need to rest (8%) as the reasons why they had avoided Facebook.

Of every five online adults, one person (20%) claims that had previously used Facebook but not anymore. This group was asked to explain reasons of their avoidance using their own words. The most prevalent reasons mentioned by them were breaching their privacy, waste of time, sickness of broad virtual communications and lack of interest in knowing other people's personal matters which are usually shared in such networks.

As these users have mentioned, sharing what have been eaten and the fact that others start leaving comments about that is so stupid and not real. Also, members of this network were so worried and sad because of problems made in their personal and emotional lives due to virtual communications.

While many users of Facebook adjust the time dedicated to this site considering the above reasons, based on the latest findings, a large number of social network users (92%) retain their Facebook account. Other findings of this study suggest the importance of social networks in online life.

In September 2009, 47% of online adults were using social networks. Today, 69 percent of online adults (more than half the adult population of USA) are using some sort of social network. During a

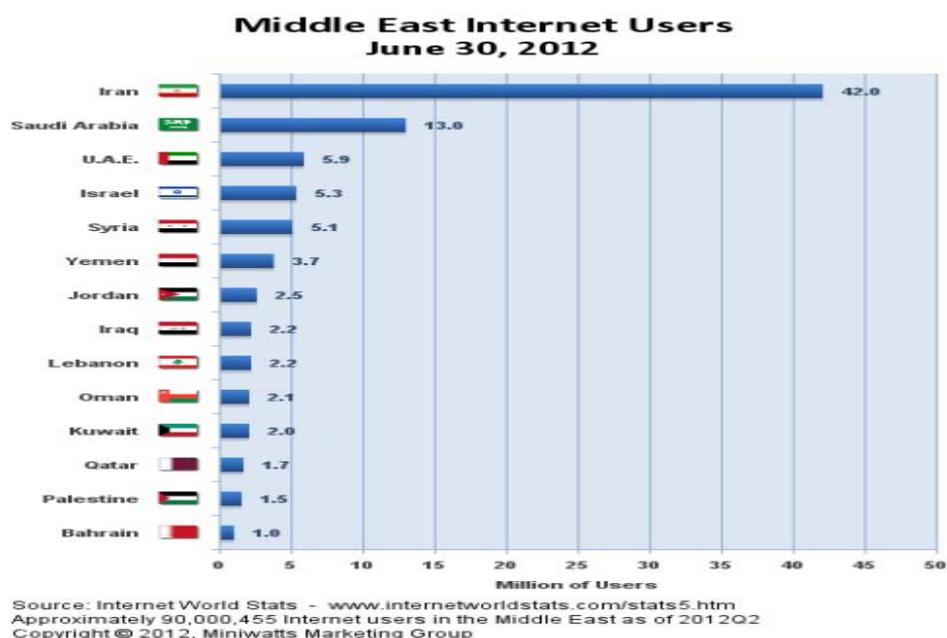
usual day, about half the internet adult users have access to a social network.

Compared to the past, social networks' users access such sites more frequently. In a separate study

conducted in November 2012, about 41% of social network users claimed that they entered such sites several times during a typical day. This number was 33% in August 2011.

**Table 1:** Reasons behind avoidance of Facebook.

61% of Facebook users had willingly avoided this site. Reasons they have mentioned for their choice are as follows:	
Tight work schedule/ not having enough time	21%
Lack of interest	10%
Time waste/ content not related	10%
Rumor spreading/ tale bearing/ over contradiction	9%
Dedicated a lot of time to this site	8%
Were on holiday/ work trips/ mission	8%
Were merely using for fun of it	8%
were tired of the site	7%
Without any special reason	6%
Worrying about privacy/ security/ ads/ spams	4%
Preferring other communication methods/ distance between Facebook and real life	2%
Health problems	2%
Lack of access to computer or Internet	2%
Temporary avoidance due to religion-related reasons	1%
Lack of interest to sharing and uploading materials on Facebook	1%



**Fig. 1:** Middle east Internet users, June 30, 2012, Source: Internet World Stats.

Facebook has many members in Iran too. According to one of existing statistics, more than two million people in Iran are Facebook users, one million of which are Tehran residents. Given the population of Iran compared to populated countries like China, Iranians still have a high coefficient of penetration of Facebook among internet users.

But according to another statistics published by the World Internet Status, population of Facebook users in Middle East has been announced as 23

million and Iranian users account for 46 percent of that. According to statistics, the number of Iranian users is approximately 11 million.

Due to filtering imposed on Facebook in Iran and retaliative action of Facebook to exclude Iran from the list of countries it services, there is no way to exactly find statistics of Iranian users, but informal statistics suggest 2 million active and professional user and 12 to 17 million other users.

**Table 2:** Segregated table of Facebook and internet users in Middle East countries.

Internet users, coefficient of penetration and members of Facebook in middle east countries						
Middle east countries	Population (2013)	Internet users till 2000	Internet users till 2012	Internet coefficient of penetration	Percentage of Facebook members in Middle East	Number of Facebook members till early 2013
Bahrain	1248348	40000	961228	77%	1.1%	413200
Iran	78868711	250000	42000000	53.3%	46.7%	-
Iraq	31129225	12500	2211860	7.1%	2.4%	2555140
Israel	7590758	1270000	5313530	70%	5.9%	3792820
Jordan	6508887	127300	2481940	38.1%	2.8%	2558140
Kuwait	2646314	50000	1963565	74.2%	2.2%	890780
Lebanon	4140289	300000	2152950	52%	2.4%	1587060
Oman	3090150	90000	2101302	68.8%	2.3%	584900
West bank	2622544	35000	1512273	57.7%	1.7%	966960
Qatar	1951591	30000	1682271	86.2%	1.9%	671720
Arabia	26534504	200000	13000000	49%	14.4%	5852520
Syria	22530746	30000	5069418	22.5%	5.6%	-
Emirate	7264070	725000	5859118	70.9%	6.5%	3442940
Yemen	24771809	15000	3691000	14.9%	4.1%	495440
Gaza Strip	1710275	-	-	-	-	-
Total	223608203	3284800	90000455	40.2%	100%	23811620

Source: Internet World States

**Analyzing Research Data:****First Hypothesis:**

1. There is a direct relationship between the amount of time users spend on Facebook and value of this social network in their lives.

Results suggest that since significance level of the test (0.247) is bigger than the test alpha (0.05), research hypothesis is not confirmed. That is, there is no direct relationship between the amount of time users spend on Facebook and value of Facebook in their lives.

Test Value=3						
T	Degree of Freedom	Significance Level	Mean Difference		95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Test 2	-1.160	.359	.247	-.03958	-.1067	.0275

**Second Hypothesis:**

2. There is a direct relationship between using Facebook and age of users.

There is a reverse relationship between using Facebook and age of users. Results of this research

showed that since significance level of the test (0.023) is less than the test alpha (0.05), research hypothesis is confirmed. That is there is a reverse relationship between using Facebook and age of users.

Test Value=3						
T	Degree of Freedom	Significance Level	Mean Difference		95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Limit	Upper Limit
6.156	357	.3	.22975		.1563	.3032

**Third Hypothesis:**

3. The more the user uses Facebook, it's more likely that they will use Facebook in the coming year.

Results show that since significance level of the test (0.549) is bigger than the test alpha (0.05), hypothesis is not confirmed. There is no direct relationship between using Facebook and prediction of using Facebook in the coming year.

Test3	Test Value=3						
	T	Degree of Freedom	Significance Level	Mean Difference		95% confidence Interval	
					Lower Limit	Upper Limit	
	.599	359	.549	.03111	.710	.1332	

**Conclusion:**

Communications and modern communication technologies play a significant role in changing

human civilization and development of a new world view and direct revolution from ancient era to industry and electronics era.

Communications in today's world have resulted in intense radical changes in traditional societies. Making decision in economic, political and cultural aspects of the world leads to consequences directed to change the structure of countries. Communication revolution especially internet and opportunities resulting from that, not only has given new dimensions to universalization but also have made changes in space and time, have closed space and time to zero and have resulted in "time compression" [11].

Role of internet is not the same in all countries around the world and this inequality somehow results from the difference seen in internet access in countries. Concept of "impact of a technology" implicitly suggests that the more the usage of a technology, the more the effect of that [8]. Therefore, in poor countries with limited internet access that few people can afford, the same and significant effect cannot be expected as developed countries. However, two countries may have equal access to internet services but as these services are provided through different methods, effects are different too. Put a bit scientifically, penetration, usage and effects of internet all depend on different social and economic variables.

The growth of technology and new evolution in communication has led to formation of social networks including Facebook which has attracted a large number of people. As this network is under dominance of world's colonizing countries which colonizes society and metamorphoses thought of people, main goal of virtual colonization which uses soft power mechanisms, is to eliminate independence of opinion of users and their membership in cultural society of colonizing country. Modern communicational technologies in conjunction with their old counterparts, practically eliminated borders which someday divided different people and cultures in economical, geographical and political terms. Given the sample size (360 questionnaires) under study, we concluded that:

- 1- The largest part, that is 29 percent of Facebook users say that importance of this site to them has not changed compared to last year.
- 2- Increase in importance of this site and the extent of time dedicated to it has been reported more in women than men.
- 3- On the other hand, about 42 percent of 18 to 29 year old users and 34 percent of 30 to 40 year old Facebook users say that the amount of time they dedicate to Facebook in a day has decreased compared to last year. These two figures are significantly high compared to 23 percent of 50 year old users reporting decrease in the extent of time dedicated to this site during a similar period of time.
- 4- The largest portion that is 69 percent of Facebook users say that they have decided not to change the extent of time dedicating to this site in the future.

As a social network, Facebook entered virtual world in February 2004 and at that time started competition with the older networks like Orkut, Yahoo 360 and many other networks related to making friends and social networks and to public amazement, turned into the most popular social network. Now, Facebook has about one billion users and many have named it the third populated country of the world after China and India.

## References

1. Com Score, 2007a. Com Score Media Metrix Releases Top 50 Web Ranking for July, Com Score available at: <http://www.comscore.com/press> accessed on 2013.
2. Com Score, 2007b. Social Networking Goes Global, September 9, Com Score: available at: <http://www.comscore.com/press/release.asp?press=1555> accessed on 2013.
3. Ellison, N.B., C. Stein Field and C. Lampe, 2007. The Benefits of Facebook Friends Social Capital and College Students Use of Online Social Network Sites, *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*. Facebook (n. d.). Newsroom, Facebook: available at: [www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics](http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics) accessed 2012.
4. Ellison, N.B., C. Stein field and C. Lampe, 2008. Changes in Use and Perception of Facebook, CSCW'08, San Diego, California, USA.
5. Gjoka, M., M. Kurant, C.T. Butts and A. Markopoulou, 2010. Walking in Facebook: A Case Study of Unbiased Sampling of OSNs, *IEEE INFOCOM 10*.
6. Granovetter, M.S., 1937. The Strength of Weak Ties, *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(6).
7. Hansen, D.L., B. Shneiderman and M.A. Smith, 2011. Analyzing Social Media Networks with NodeXL: Insights From a Connected World.
8. Paknazar, S., 2001. Impact of Internet on Developing Countries, web magazine, issue 17.
9. Sarmad, Z., A. Bazargan, 1998. Research Method in Behavioral Sciences, Mashregh International Group, Tehran.
10. Sibona, C. and S. Walczak, 2011. Unfriending on Facebook: Friend Request and Online/Offline Behavior Analysis, 44th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS), Kauai, HI.
11. Toffler, A., 1992. The third wave, translated by Shahindokht Kharazmi, Nashr-e-No publication, Tehran.