

Debilitating comparisons & Idealized reality

Elder Gary E Stevenson on Social Media - BYU Women's Conference 2017

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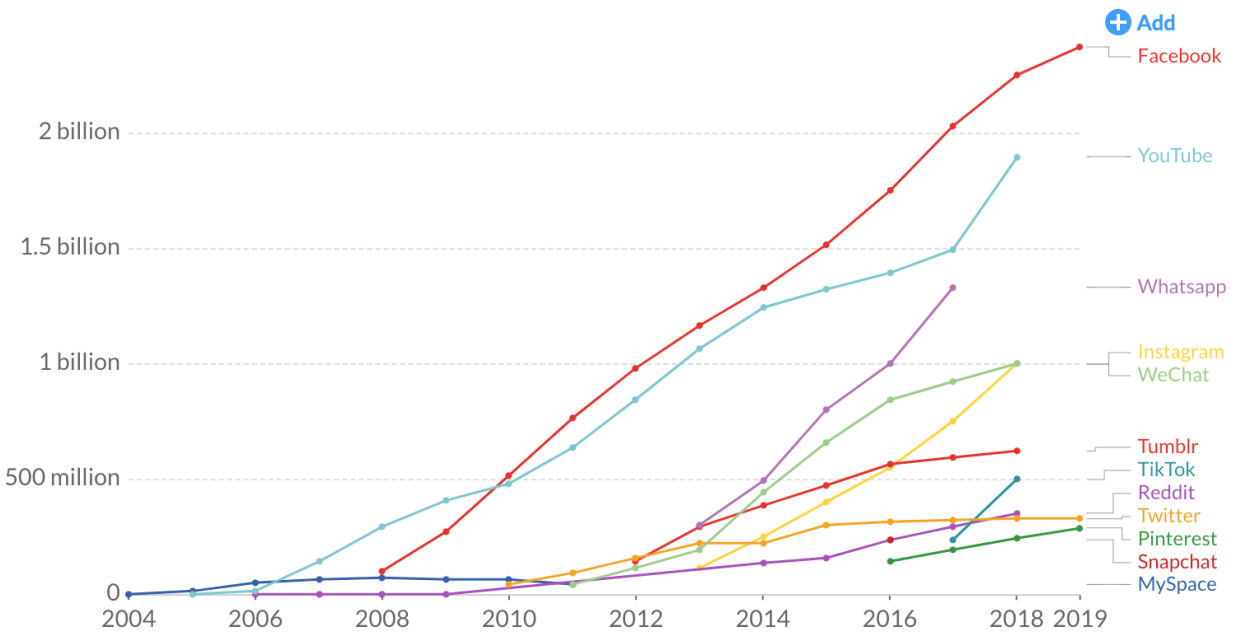
Apostle Paul - [2 Corinthians 10:12](#)

- “...but they measuring themselves..., and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.”

Number of people using social media platforms

Estimates correspond to monthly active users (MAUs). Facebook, for example, measures MAUs as users that have logged in during the past 30 days. See source for more details.

Our World
in Data

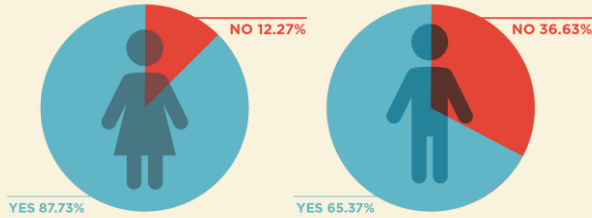


Source: Statista and TNW (2019)

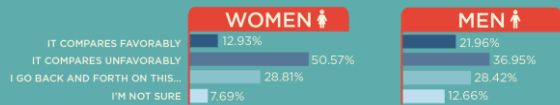
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Selfie Stats

DO YOU COMPARE YOUR BODY
TO IMAGES YOU SEE IN THE MEDIA?



Does Your Body Compare Favorably or Unfavorably to Images in the Media?



HOW SOCIAL COMPARISON CAN HARM US



Increased Depression

Feeling envy and down on ourselves because of what others post on social media is associated with worsening depression.



Poor Body Image

While the idealized standards for men and women's bodies are different, both are vulnerable to poor body-image & low self-esteem.



Decreased Well-being

People who are heavy users of social media have been shown to have a lower sense of self, suffer from depression, and even have thoughts of suicide.



Eating Disorders

More time on social media is also associated with the desire to change one's body through disordered eating habits.



Signs Social Media Is Affecting Your Mental Health



It distracts you from work



You use it to escape "bad" emotions



You're being trolled or cyberbullied



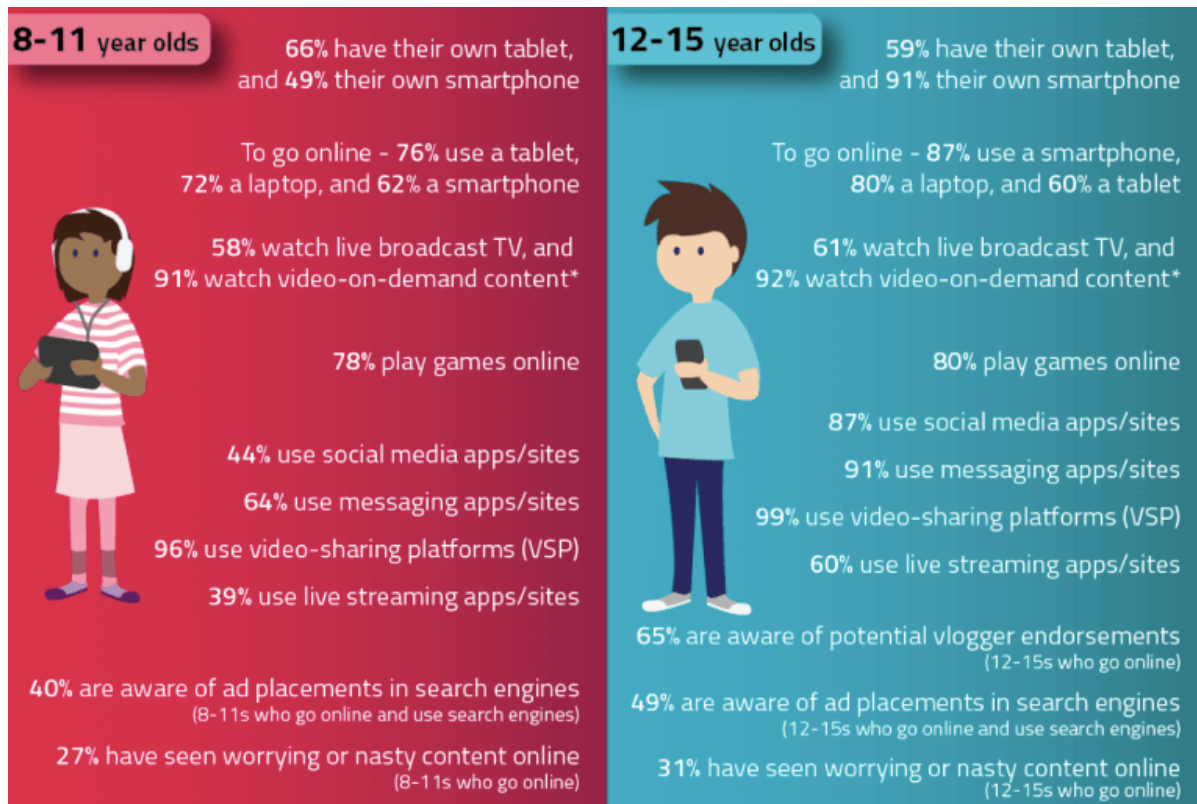
You spend more time online than with family and friends



Feelings of anxiety, depression, and loneliness are spiking

verywell

Fig 1. Applying the five systems model to social media use



Primary Sources (black text) are from “Media” caption on churchofjesuschrist.org and Elder David A. Bednar *To Sweep the Earth as with a Flood*, Brigham Young University Education Week devotional, Aug. 19, 2014)). Secondary sources (red text) primarily from Social Media: *How to Share Your Beliefs Both Kindly and Boldly*, Holly Hudson cited from <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ya-weekly/2020/09/social-media-how-to-share-your-beliefs-both-kindly-and-boldly?lang=eng>.

1. We are being directed to use social media to do good.

Church leaders have . . . encouraged us to use social media to share the gospel with others. Elder David A. Bednar said, “Social media channels are global tools that can personally and positively impact large numbers of individuals and families. And I believe the time has come for us as disciples of Christ to use these inspired tools appropriately and more effectively to . . . accomplish the Lord’s work”

As we share gospel truth on social media, we can be authentic and seek to uplift others. We can pray to “find those who will come and see, come and help, and come and stay” and then share our faith “in natural and normal ways” (Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “[Missionary Work: Sharing What Is in Your Heart](#),” *Ensign* or *Liabona*, May 2019, 17). Elder Bednar said, “Share the gospel with genuine love and concern for others. Be courageous and bold but not overbearing in sustaining and defending our beliefs, and avoid contention. As disciples our purpose should be to use social media channels as a means of projecting the light and truth of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ into a world that increasingly is dark and confused” (“[To Sweep the Earth as with a Flood](#)”).

I have friends who post about topics I agree with, but in a tone I disagree with. Before you post something, you should ask yourself, “Why am I posting this?” Are you posting so people think you’re righteous? Are you posting to purposely cause contention or drama? Or are you truly focusing on your true testimony as led by the Spirit? When people see and feel that your motives are pure, they’re more likely to listen to your message.

2. Our messages should be consistently uplifting and should carry a tone consistent with our lives as disciples of Jesus Christ

“Our messages should seek to edify and uplift, rather than to argue, debate, condemn, or belittle.”

Conversely, when someone cultivates their social media platform to be a place where sharing beliefs is normal and expected, their ideas will likely be much better received. I’m not saying that your whole account needs to be dedicated to your testimony (please share those funny memes), but your social media platforms should have some indication of your faith. If you’re not currently in the habit of sharing gospel content regularly, start small. Maybe share a scripture or something you learned from *Come, Follow Me* once a week or once a month. Your friends and followers will see that you’re just genuinely sharing a part of your life. When people know that you’re comfortable with sharing your beliefs, they will be more comfortable when you want to share your testimony about something that may be a hotly discussed topic.

Social media isn’t always the best place to share every single one of your beliefs. If you have a specific message to share that you think will benefit a smaller group of people, sharing your testimony in person or through a private message can be more appropriate. If you’re posting

something about a charged topic that many people are arguing about, make sure the timing of your post is appropriate and considerate. This could mean waiting a few days or weeks to avoid adding to the argument. Respectfully sharing your take on a situation is much different than posting a thinly veiled rebuttal to something a friend posted.

Have you ever seen a social media account where the only things shared are funny memes and jokes? I personally love following those, but it would be strange if they suddenly started sharing spiritual thoughts each day. I also have some friends who never post anything besides the occasional angry rant about some issue that's been bothering them. These posts almost always encourage contention.

3. Social media use should be balanced with our other important commitments.

“We need not become social media experts or fanatics. And we do not need to spend inordinate amounts of time creating and disseminating elaborate messages.”

“Too much time can be wasted, too many relationships can be harmed or destroyed, and precious patterns of righteousness can be disrupted when technology is used improperly. We should not allow even good applications of social media to overrule the better and best uses of our time, energy, and resources.”

4. Posts should be on point and focused on the message we are trying to share.

Remember that people are probably less likely to read through a long post detailing everything you think and feel. Sharing a few meaningful thoughts is much more likely to be read and internalized. As Alma teaches, “By small and simple things are great things brought to pass; ... by very small means the Lord doth confound the wise and bringeth about the salvation of many souls” ([Alma 37:6–7](#)). Attaching a beautiful picture of the Savior or a temple or something relating to what you're sharing will also make it more likely that your post will be noticed and appreciated. A beautiful picture can be conducive to the Spirit, which softens hearts and helps people feel less combative.

5. To engage with social media does not mean that we need to engage with all parts of social media. Be careful to interact only with those parts of social media that are consistent with your goal to share and uplift.

While you can't decide how others react, you can decide how *you* react. Follow the Spirit to know when you should respond to comments that aren't respectful. You can agree to disagree or find some common ground. If someone's really trying to stir up contention, you can always delete the comment, unfriend the person, or unfollow their posts until tempers have cooled off. But try not to let contention discourage you. As you share your faith online, you may find opposition, but the Lord says, “Blessed are [you] who are persecuted for my name's sake, for [yours] is the kingdom of heaven” ([3 Nephi 12:10](#)). All our efforts to share the gospel are counted.