

Is social media to blame for our ignorance?

Examine whether social media is responsible for the ignorance of the people.

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Student Answer

1) Introduction

Social media has been gaining popularity in the twenty-first century. With social media being a indispensable part of many people's lives nowadays, it has brought along problems to society. From cyber attacks to as basic as ignorance in our daily lives. Ignorance exists in the form of being unconcerned with daily happenings around us and the truly important global issues, as well as , the quality of information bring shared around on the social media platforms. I partly disagree that social media is at fault for our ignorance.

2) Main Body - Opposing View

Firstly, it is a common view that social media is responsible for our lack of interest in real-life occurrences as it diverts our attention towards more interesting items posted on social media. In the early 2000s, Facebook was a widely popular social media platform, for people to make mutual friends, post about their own lives and hobbies , as well as spread news around. As of 2019, social media sites boomed, with new comers like Instagram, Whatsapp, Snapchat and Pinterest gaining huge popularity. According to research done by Statista, in 2018, the average time spent on social networking was projected as 144 minutes per day, an increase of 1 hour a day from 2012. With so much time spent on social media catching up on celebrity news, and admiring the lifestyles of friends, people tend to be less interested with reality. Therefore the common perception would be that social media is to be blame for our ignorance as it serves as a distraction.

3) Main Body - Rebuttal

However, humans have long proven the negative impacts of excessive usage of social media, both mentally and physically. With the right practices and knowledge in mind, people have the choice of reducing social media usage and switch their attention to real-life news, They also have the choice of using social media while still being aware of the happenings around them. At the end of the day, people can be distracted by anything else in life other than social media, and still be ignorant towards the world around them. Therefore, I believe that ignorance is a problem that has been around for a long time, but with the emergence of social media, it has only made matters worse.

4) Main Body - Supporting View 1

Furthermore, many countries have held educational campaigns to promote the importance of being up to date with the latest happenings. For instance in Singapore, students learn in schools that general knowledge is important as they will grow to become contributing adults of the nation one day where such information will be useful. Being informed makes one more credible and prepared. For instance, if one is not aware of the poor economy that his country is facing, he will not brace himself for the probability of getting retrenched and start preparing by searching for other job opportunities and cutting down on spending. Being unaware of news like the Burma Rohingya crisis, and Malaysia's eradication of the United Nations Elimination of Racial Discrimination Act, makes one uninformed about the dire consequences of racial and religious discrimination within a society. Being more informed, can make one wiser, and it is up to individuals to stay aware. Therefore social media is not to blame for our ignorance as governments have stepped up to raise awareness about the issue of staying informed.

5) Main Body - Supporting View 2

Social media which claims to be a source of distraction is also a good source of information. During a 2019 survey by Statista, over 70 percent of respondents from Mexico, South Africa and Bulgaria stated that they used social media as a source of news. Although some countries like Ireland and Slovakia choose not to believe news on social media due to lack of credibility, social media is undeniably a portal through which information about the real world can be transmitted. Instagram and Facebook are currently used by new sites such as the Straits Times and New York Times to post top stories. Therefore, with news, and facts so conveniently available on social media, it cannot be held entirely responsible for our ignorance.

6) Main Body - Supporting View 3

Most importantly, social media is a platform for people to share knowledge and about their lives. Users get to be updated about the lives of people they follow. Family and friends can communicate and share stories with the blessing of the platform. While being too addicted to social media such that one loses his ability to form relationships and interact with others in real life can happen, most people keep daily communication skills and still use social media for influence and interaction. The purpose of social media is for convenience and shrinking the world into a small community where everyone get to voice their opinions or share about their lives. Therefore social media has made us more aware of what is happening around us from small family ties to important global issues.

7) Conclusion

All in all, social media has worsened ignorance, but it cannot be blamed as the main cause. Education for people to be more wise in their usage of social media has been on the rise, and these are platforms where news and information are made easily accessible. The ball is in every user's court regarding the issue of whether they are willing to to be kept informed. Therefore, I disagree to a small extent that social media is responsible for our ignorance.

Tutor Answer

1) Introduction

While social media as we know it only began to enter the public consciousness in the mid-2000s, it has quickly become an indispensable and fully integrated part of the modern connected life. It is undeniable that the ability to connect instantly and seamlessly with countless people across the globe has changed the way we think and live. Some believe that this change has been for the worse, and that the shifts in habits and mindsets born of social media have contributed to a woeful popular ignorance. Others see social media as yet another of the many tools and technologies in content generators' and consumers' hands, attributing any and all possible thinking and behavioral changes and consequences to the desires and actions of users, instead of to the medium itself. While this essay acknowledges the substantial agency of users in interacting with and being influenced by social media, it contends that to see the form of social media as consequently devoid of inherent influence is myopic. Ultimately, it is undeniable that social media has, through changing the way we think and approach information and ideas, been to blame for our ignorance.

2) Main Body - Opposing View

Social media cannot and should not be the culprit for our ignorance as it is but a value-neutral platform, and cannot in and of itself be held fully liable for shifts in behaviour and thinking. While social media has certain specific characteristics that might facilitate some kinds of interaction over others, it is ultimately on users to determine what kind of interaction the medium is used for, and the consequences of such interaction. Social media platforms such as Facebook can be used for constructive discussion and sharing of insightful articles, or memes and excrement-posting and Twitter can be used to marshal activists, or to broadcast daily banalities. Much as a car cannot be blamed for an accident, such a mere tool as social media cannot be blamed for the ignorance manifested in its users.

3) Main Body - Rebuttal

However, it is ridiculous to assume that the nature and usage patterns of any medium, quite apart from its content, are entirely neutral and devoid of influence. Even if the content of social media is (at least notionally) up to the users to determine, the peculiarities of social media have had at least a substantial contribution to the standardization of the society where it may have forged by the values of the society. While social media is not directly responsible for the content posted on it, it has nevertheless provided the platform for users the opportunity to spread their own personal agenda that may promote anti-social behaviours.

4) Main Body - Supporting View 1

Social media should be blamed for our ignorance as its constant and instantly accessible stream of narcissistic trivia has led us to value and crave the unimportant and valueless over useful and meaningful information. It provides us with instant gratification since amusement and distraction are available at our

fingertips, especially with mobile devices such as using Instagram or Twitter feed to showcase the users follower on what we have been up to . As a result, many of us frequently fall to the temptation of filling up the bulk of our time with the consumption of such hollow intellectual calories, with the limited time not being used to acquire useful information. This is because it is much more pleasurable and less stressful to distract oneself with pointless trivia and personal minutiae such that vast amount of time is spent on social media. Over time, social media has conditioned us to instinctively seek trivia, leaving us with no interest or motivation to learn important things where it infuses in us the little comfort in life since it easy to influence us to adopt a hedonistic lifestyle. With our knowledge bank and desire to improve it absent, we have become more ignorant because of the proliferation of social media.

5) Main Body - Supporting View 2

Second, social media should be blamed for our ignorance as the ready availability of opinions and “information” on it has made us less willing to ask critical questions and seek a better understanding of the world around us, in other words social media has conform our thinking into standardized values. Many of these contents are readily available on social media, more so than on other media such political or social interest pages like SMRT Feedback, Temasek Review and Wake up Singapore. These perspectives may vary in credibility but are often misinterpreted as gospel truth by social media users due to their lack of media savvy or laziness to find assurance to the claims being told. Furthermore, it could also be the result of intentional misrepresentation by social media sources. Hence, this can lead to both lack of awareness of the full range of perspectives on issues, as well as a habit of taking things at face value without exercising critical thinking which both constitute ignorance.

6) Main Body - Supporting View 3

Lastly, social media should be blamed for our ignorance as the ease of posting opinions and gaining others’ support makes us unused and disinclined to fully consider and craft our views and perspectives since small issues and trivia like voicing out self-centred concern which promotes individualism can be done with just a click of a button. As a result, it is far easier to gain widespread popularity and currency on social media, regardless of the merits of the opinion expressed just like what is being done by “Social Justice Warriors”, a negative term used to describe individuals who are engaged in activism to raise personal reputation like social liberalism, feminism, cultural inclusiveness and politically correct views. Seemingly spared from the need to ensure quality of argument, we become accustomed to focusing more on extreme delivery and sensationalism instead of the strength of our arguments themselves, leading to shoddier thinking and ignorance.

7) Conclusion

In conclusion, we should accept that social media is a tool whose content is determined by users. Also, even if social media were to blame for ignorance, question whether the blame should be pinned on social media or those who design it. Either way, the unique characteristics of social media make it very much to blame for increased ignorance among the population today, as the population are affected and swayed by these characteristics even if they have notional control over the content.
