Online Social Networking: A New Form of Social Interaction

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Abstract—This paper will present the findings of the pilot studies on the use of online social network in Malaysia. A total of 40 questionnaires were distributed to active users of this social media to get an early indication on this activity. In addition, discussion about the global activities of online social networking is also undertaken as a comparison. The analysis shows that online social networking has been used as a new mode of communication especially for Internet active users to meet and interact with their friends. Early findings indicate that they spent quite many hours in this environment and log in into their accounts a few times a day. This shows that social interaction in cyberspace by using new media applications such as social networking has been adapted by more and more people and has changed human communication.

Index Terms—Malaysia, Online community, Social interaction, Social media.

I. INTRODUCTION

Statistics show that the Internet is increasingly being used and has become a must for some people. Besides being a source of reference or “library” for all forms of information and knowledge, this medium is also used as an effective means of communication tool in social interaction. Because the computing and Internet technology keeps changing over time, people shall always find new ways to use them in communication.

Since the introduction of web 2.0 technologies, the interactivity elements that are offered to the user had turned the Internet into a modern social platform that involved mass participation. It has evolved into this new form of social media that can transmit multimedia content and eased the interaction between senders and receivers or between content providers and the audiences. This media has led to the formation of a new form of communication that has consolidated mass communication and interpersonal communication into new interactivities such as chat groups, virtual groups in workplaces, and online communities [1].

II. MEDIA & ICT REVOLUTION

For McLuhan, new forms of media have changed the human experiences [2]. Harold Innis’s words reflected the truth when he said that media technology that was present in a society at a certain period of time would affect the individual in society, in their thinking, communication, and behaviour [3]. Therefore, the notion of an evolving technology as alluded to by McLuhan, may be seen in the four eras of the development of human communication such as following: (i) the tribal era, (ii) the literacy era, (iii) the era of printing, and (iv) the electronic era [3]-[5].

This is supported by McQuail [5] who states that there is a relationship between the dominant communication technologies in each era with the important features of community. Thus, in each case, the changes from one era to another era shall bring forth a new mode of communication that would lead to significant changes in human life and society. Each media and communication technologies that exist—from print to electronic media, media, interpersonal, and new media—tend to continue with the same features, which cover longer distances, at greater speed, but also bring more information to the audience. For Brody [6], we are now entering the fifth era, an era that emphasised interactive communication compared to oral, writing, prints, and telecommunication in the previous development of human communication.

This shows that communication modes are changing and has now crossed such distances with the help of computerization and digital technology especially the emergence of Internet and its various new applications. Communication and interaction may now take place through online or in virtual world or cyberspace without having to face each other at the same place and same time.

Many more people use the new media technology, the Internet in particular, to meet their psychological and social needs. Internet is the place to meet and interact and form relationships. In fact, this form of social interaction or communication has become increasingly common in our daily lives. Interpersonal communication has been said to be the main cause of Internet use [7].

III. SOCIAL MEDIA: ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKING

Application or mode of communication is enabled by the prevalence of Web 2.0 technology at the end of year 2004. The previous Web 1.0 consists of static pages and offer little interactivity. However, this is different from Web 2.0 or Web "read/write" which refers to the development of online community-centered application based on the degree of interactivity, inclusiveness, collaborative, authentic materials, and digital literacy skills which are higher.

With technological advances from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0, new media is changing and growing. According to O’Reilley, Web 2.0 refers to the second generation of web development and is often associated with social media applications. The