
The Effect Of Social Media Challenges On Current Generation

Introduction

Social media platforms allow users to have conversations, share information and create web-content. Billions of people around the world use social media to share information and make connections daily. On the similar context Asur & Huberman (2010 p. 492) stated that "Social media has exploded as a category of online discourse where people create content, share it, bookmark it and network at a prodigious rate".

When it comes to the question that where younger generation is heading on the wrong path in the modern technological world. There are plenty of factors that have played their role such as communication gap between kids and parents about sharing a problem. There is a regular presence of immortal explicit material and misuse of social media platforms and cyberspace. "According to a poll, 22% of teenagers log on to their favorite social media site more than 10 times a day, and more than half of adolescents log in to a social media more than once a day" according to O'Keeffe, G. S., & Clarke-Pearson (2011, p. 800) in a study. This number has significantly increased over the years.

With the advancement of social media, people are given the ability to showcase the popular tradition of daring friends to a variety of activities that has been dubbed as "Social Media Challenge". This paper discusses the impact of challenges/trends set on social media towards the youth of current generation.

Social Media Challenges

The social media challenges that are selected for this study are the ones which became popular in the period 2013-2018 and which has the highest number of hashtags in Instagram posts.

ALS Ice Bucket Challenge (2014) ~790k Instagram posts

The ice bucket challenge is by far the most constructive and helpful challenge which is widely accepted and copied on social media. It started as an ALS fundraiser campaign, quickly transformed into one of the biggest viral sensations ever, drawing in celebrities such as Oprah, Mark Zuckerberg, Bill Gates and to do the challenge.

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However, this challenge was spoiled by an individual not paying minimum respect to safety precautions when a woman died after a bucket full of ice water hit her head.

22 Pushups Challenge (2016) ~140k Instagram posts

This challenge was started by a group called “Honor Courage Commitment” to raise awareness for veteran suicide prevention along with honoring military service members and veterans.

Floor is lava Challenge (2017) ~120k Instagram posts

It is a social game in which a person yells “the floor is lava”, and the other person(s) must get off the ground by getting on top of something or they fail the challenge. Statically it is an old game dating back to 2004 but it gained popularity again in 2017 when Instagram personalities Kevin Freshwater and Jahannah James both posted video compilations of times they challenged each other.

It became nuisance when people specially youths started doing in public places like parking lots and shopping market and started created more trouble for employees there.

Invisible Box Challenge (2017) ~32k Instagram posts

Another social game in which people mime tapping on an imaginary box and stepping over a roughly foot-step high. The challenge being keep your one foot still, as if braced on the box, while the other leaps over the destination.

It was first done by a football player on Twitter and became popular in a short amount of time. Several media outlets covered the trend including NBC, Daily Mail, Telegraph, Mirror, The Sun, Time and more.

Mannequin Challenge (2016) ~1.9m Instagram posts

One of the biggest trends of 2016, which originated at Edward H. White High School in Jacksonville, Florida, when a student decided to stand completely still at front of the class and other students joined in. It spread like wildfire as celebrities, professional sports teams, activists and even politicians joined this trend on Twitter and Instagram while the song “Black Beatles” by Rae Sremmurd played in the background.

Bottle Flip Challenge (2016) ~190k Instagram posts

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It is a social media challenge that involves throwing a plastic bottle, typically filled with water, in such a way that it lands upright on a flat surface. On August 20th, 2016, a YouTuber Ryan Higa uploaded montage of himself and several friends flipping bottles on various surface. Within one month, the video gained over 5.8 million views.

Running Man Challenge (2016) ~345k Instagram posts

This Challenge started when two college basketball players did a close-armed running man-style dance to the tune of the 1995 song "My Boo" by Ghost Town DJs. The dance became popular during the 2016 NCAA championships, after being spread by players from the university of Maryland.

Kylie Jenner Challenge (2015) ~156k Instagram posts

A viral trend where teenagers attempt to temporarily enlarge their lips by a suction technique called "the shot glass effect" in order to imitate the look of model and socialite Kylie Jenner.

The trend has been criticized due to the fact that the intense effect can lead to permanent disfigurement and scarring of lips.

Cinnamon Challenge ~15k Instagram posts

It's a viral food dare that involves swallowing a teaspoon of cinnamon in 60 seconds without drinking any fluids. Since the early 2000s, the game has become well known for its extreme difficulty and thousands of videos with people attempting the challenge have been uploaded onto YouTube.

The results of a study (2013) by University of Miami professor Dr. Steven investigated various health risks associated with the cinnamon challenge. The report revealed that as cinnamon challenge videos increased in popularity on YouTube, calls to poison control centers and emergency room visits saw a significant increase in frequency as well. Lipshultz found that the substance cellulose contained within cinnamon powder can induce pulmonary fibrosis, a scarring of the lungs which causes symptoms similar to emphysema.

In My Feelings Challenge (2018) ~680k Instagram posts

This year's dance challenge, which consists of people showing off dance moves that caricature the lyrics of Drake's song "In My Feelings", became hit after an internet comedian Shiggy posted a video of himself doing the same. Like "Mannequin Challenge" and "Running Man

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Challenge”, this challenge also became hit with celebrities like Will Smith, Kevin Hart, Russell Wilson, and more. Soon fans started doing the same, in which they would dance while the car is moving slowly.

Due to this there has been some reports of people who have fallen while getting out of the motor vehicles. There is one video showing a young man getting run over by another car while doing the challenge.

Conclusion

Social Media having such an influence, there are bound to have effects both positive and negative. The ALS Ice Bucket Challenge managed to garner everyone’s attention towards social causes and it could be counted as the biggest fundraiser campaign towards social cause. The 22 Pushups Challenge helped raise awareness among the youngsters regarding suicide prevention and along with honoring military service members and veterans. These were the instances where the social media proved meaningful. There were other instances where this only caused a menace. The currently trending “In My Feelings Challenge” has already resulted in multiple deaths all around the world. The “Kylie Jenner Challenge” only created a misconception of beauty among people. These are just a few instances of situations where the social media only proved to do more harm than good. Multiple other such instances have been observed, few of which are already listed above.

The influence of these social media platforms is such. We can estimate the same from the number of active users that Facebook alone has – 1 Billion! The other social media sites such as YouTube, Instagram and Twitter also have massive followers. In today’s world following trends is the latest thing. Imagine someone somewhere having a huge fan following shares something that was previously unseen and unheard of, the kind of interest it would generate in the public. They start following the same without even realizing it’s pros and cons. We have examples such as #GirlLove started by a famous YouTube personality “Superwoman” a.k.a Lilly Singh to help support girls education. In this regard she has uploaded videos of her interviewing famous personalities like Melinda Gates, Michelle Obama etc to name a few and her message has widely been received with positivity and support throughout the globe. But there are the other cases where personalities like Kylie Jenner who is worshipped by the young girls when it comes to beauty. Her techniques like "the shot glass effect" has led to permanent disfiguring of lips of people around the world. Social media sometimes do more harm than good. This begs the question, with such use of social media, is the current generation heading the right direction?

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