Paper: Potter Box Ethical and Advertising Fundamentals and Strategy

- Social Media use restrictions for teens/children

Arielle Valera

Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, University of Southern California

PR 508: Public Relations and Advertising Fundamentals and Strategy

Professor Dotty Diemer

November 18, 2024

I. Definition

Social media is, "forms of electronic communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content" (Merriam-Webster 2024). Social media has become a staple in today's society. Almost everyone has it. It allows people around the world to connect and share content with a simple click. Social media provides everyone on platforms to speak up about their opinions and contribute to trends. With the feeling of being connected with almost anyone around the world, social media has played significant roles in how younger generations have been raised, specially in Generation Z and Generation Alpha. Many positive and negative outcomes have been generated with the help of social media, causing many to question whether social media for teens/children should or should not have restrictions.

II. Social Media ***Should Have*** Restrictions for Teens/Children

- **Mental Health**

According to a Yale research study, "Teens ages 12-15 who used social media over three hours each day faced twice the risk of having negative mental health outcomes, including depression and anxiety symptoms" (Katella 2024). This stems from how it is much easier for teens and children to view content that makes them compare themselves to what they see online. Also, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, rates of depression, anxiety, and suicide in young people were climbing. In 2021, more than 40% of high school students reported depressive symptoms (Weir 2023). This is most

likely due to how social media can carry any type of content, including content that does not reflect the real world. With Aristotle's golden mean, social media can be restricted with time, giving teens/children a balance of social interactions both online and offline. With social media time restrictions towards teens, detrimental content can be viewed less due to their limited time of social media.

- **Cyberbullying**

Adding onto mental health, social media can also be a breeding ground for cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is, "the use of technology to harass, threaten, embarrass, or target another person" (Ben-Joseph 2022). Online bullying is easier to commit, especially in teens/children, since the individual posting the bullying posts are usually anonymous (Ben-Joseph 2022). Cyberbullying could lead to depression and anxiety on victims, causing them to do poorly in many day-to-day tasks. Teens/children who have been cyberbullied tend to show that they struggle to concentrate in school (Ben-Joseph 2022). Providing restrictions and monitoring what teens/children post and share on social media platforms can help decrease cyberbullying.

- **Social Life Skills**

With social media anyone can connect online, but "disconnect" in person. According to New Horizons Wellness Services, a care clinic that provides psychological and occupational services for anyone, social media can, "lead to a decline in essential life skills like real-time problem solving, empathy, and effective verbal communication" (New Horizons Wellness Services 2024). This is due to how social media is asynchronous, meaning that it provides more time for users to come up with solutions. Additionally, social media platforms are used mainly by people to communicate through text rather than through verbal communication. This goes back to how balancing the time spent on social media is crucial and how Aristotle's golden mean should be applied to teens/children's time on social media. Having restrictions on the amount of time teens/children spend on social media can give them opportunities to focus on in-person interactions and help them build more verbal communication skills.

III. Social Media ***Should Not Have*** Restrictions for Teens/Children

- **Support Networks**

Social media can help those who are in isolation from the outside world by having a form of connection with others online. According to a group of researchers from the University of Toronto, "Social media can help kids stay in touch with support networks. That can be especially important for kids from marginalized groups, such as LGBTQ+ adolescents who may be reluctant or unable to discuss their identity with caregivers" (Weir 2023). Having no social media restrictions allows teens/children to find support groups and friends that they cannot find in their day-to-day lives. These groups provide comfort to those who feel like they are alone in their current situation when in reality, many individuals are going through similar situations as them.

- **Digital Literacy**

With technology being constantly implemented into careers, teens/children can get used to using technology and digital platforms. This provides them skills that they can later apply to their daily lives and professional careers. Having no social media restrictions for teens/children can, "improve learning, help students discern misinformation and give them access to a wide variety of resources, among other things" (Evans 2024). Digital literacy can tie into Kant's universal law; since technology is being constantly used in society, people should follow and continue to use technology. Therefore, without digital literacy teens/children would develop poor skills when it comes to discerning information online.

IV. Findings and Personal Analyzation

Before researching whether or not social media should have restrictions for teens/children, I stood with restrictions being implemented because I've noticed my 13-year-old niece and 16-year-old nephew showing the effects of social media. They specifically show how they don't have great verbal communication skills whenever I try to talk to them. During the duration of the family gatherings, they also tend to stay quiet in a corner with a smart device in their hands without interacting with any of their cousins the same ages as them. Based on the research I have found, I still believe that social media should have restrictions for teens/children. My stance has actually become stronger in believing that social media should have some restrictions because of the overall negative effects it has on mental and social health. The restrictions should be based on the amount of time they can be on social media platforms. The research on why there should be no restrictions in social media for teens/children made me reflect on my morals a little more

because I have seen many of my friends and family use social media to feel less alone in their outside world problems. They have been able to find actual friends who do care about them online and have met them in person. However, I did not change my stance because I have seen those same friends and family go through months of getting scammed and catfished, leading them to be further hurt and feel more isolated. Therefore, I still believe that there should be restrictions for teens/children on social media.

###

References

Cyberbullying (for teens). (n.d.). https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/cyberbullying.html#:~:text=What%20Is%20Cyberbullying%3F,hurt%20or%20embarrass%20someone%20else.

How Does Social Media Affect Social Skills? (2024, September 23). New Horizons Wellness Services. https://nhws.us/2024/09/23/how-does-social-media-affect-social-skills/#:~:text=Social%20media%20can%20impact%20social,and%20support%20long%2Ddistance%20relationships.

Katella, K. (2024, June 17). *How social media affects your teen's mental health: a parent's guide*. Yale Medicine. https://www.yalemedicine.org/news/social-media-teen-mental-health-a-parents-guide#:~:text=According%20to%20a%20research%20study,including%20depression%20and%20anxiety%20symptoms.

social media. (2024). In *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/social%20media

University of San Diego - Professional & Continuing Education. (2024, October 22). *A Teacher's Guide to Digital Literacy & Digital Literacy Skills in the classroom*. University of San Diego - Professional & Continuing Education. https://pce.sandiego.edu/digital-literacy/#:~:text=UNICEF%20defines%20digital%20literacy%20as,and%20local%20cultures%20and%20contexts.%E2%80%9D

Weir, K. (n.d.). *Social media brings benefits and risks to teens. Psychology can help identify a path forward*. https://www.apa.org. https://www.apa.org/monitor/2023/09/protecting-teens-on-social-media#:~:text=A%20large%20body%20of%20research,perpetrators%20and%20victims%20of%20cyberhate.