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NOA Mock-8 Jan 2024

English Essay

Topic 4: New generation is learning unprecedented skills from social media

Outline

1) Introduction

Thesis: While many debate the advantages offered by social media, it is undeniably true that in the digital age, it has offered hitherto unseen skills, especially for the younger generation, to learn and utilize.

2) The role of social media in disseminating skills

3) Thesis: Social media has provided access to new skills

(a) Social media has disseminated knowledge of skills such as crypto-trading, and stocks.

(b) Social media provides avenues for gaming and monetization

(c) Development of influencer skills in today's "attention economy"

(d) ~~Learning skills such as content creation is~~
Content creation: a burgeoning skill.

(e) Entrepreneurship has never been easier.

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4) **Antithesis:** Social media has failed to impart skills

(a) Knowledge of crypto-trading and stocks is not imparted solely through social media.

(b) Gaming is not a legitimate skill

(c) Influencing people has existed long before social media.

(d) Content-creation does not ~~owe its success~~ ^{require skill to} ~~to social media~~ execute.

(e) Entrepreneurship has always existed, and it does not owe its success to social media.

5) **Synthesis:** Social media has successfully provided unique skills to the youth.

(a) Social media is single-handedly responsible for the popularisation of crypto-trading

(b) Today, gaming is bigger and more monetizable than ever in history.

(c) Social media has revolutionised the concept of influencing.

(d) Content creation is an a highly skill-intensive endeavour.

(e) Social media has ~~re~~ transformed the way entrepreneurship is perceived.

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In an era dominated by the digital revolution, where screens have become our windows to the world, the new generation is not merely scrolling through memes and posting selfies - they are both consciously and subconsciously engaged in the acquisition of unprecedented skills through the dynamic realm of social media. Far from being a mere distraction, social media has evolved into a powerful educational platform, imparting seemingly inaccessible skills such as crypto-currency trading, as well as other avenues for earning via freelancing and monetization. Influencers today are able to ~~use~~ apply the skills they have acquired via platforms such as Instagram and Twitter, and the realms of content creation and online entrepreneurship have been totally galvanised. However, some still argue that social media's role in skill-acquisition is blown out of proportion, and much of this knowledge ~~was~~ has been previously accessible, while many of the skills acquired via social media are simply dismissed as being outright irrelevant. While many debate the advantages offered by social media, it is undeniably true that in the digital age, it has offered the opportunity to learn and utilize hitherto unseen skills, for the younger generation in particular.

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In the digital epoch, social media functions as a dynamic workshop where the curriculum is no longer confined to conventional subjects. Consider the burgeoning skills of content creation, freelancing, streaming, and influencer marketing - all of which find fertile ground on platforms like YouTube, Twitch, and Instagram. Social media platforms have democratized the job market, enabling freelancers to harness their skills as entrepreneurs and connect with clients globally. Streaming, whether in the avenue of gaming or lifestyle content, has become a legitimate realm for the acquisition and execution of skills such as self-expression and income generation, via presentation, entertainment, and audience engagement. Moreover, the art of personal branding has been elevated by influencer marketing, transforming individuals into artists and entrepreneurs, who navigate collaborations, negotiations, and audience management. Far from mere pastimes, these skills form the backbone of a new professional landscape, where the new generation is not just consumers, but active shapers of the digital economy, and by extension, the world.

The advent of social media brought with it ease of access to information, as well as knowledge previously considered hidden

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behind pretentious barriers in the form of "certifications" and paper qualifications. Cryptocurrency trading stands out as a prime example. Challenging concepts such as blockchain and market trends are easier to grasp when knowledge is easily accessible and skills are disseminated via webinars and social media accounts. For instance, a study conducted at Cornell University found that social media indicators, along with classic technical variables, lead to a significant improvement in the prediction of cryptocurrency price fluctuations (Marco Orto, On Technical Trading..., 2021). This shows how social media not only allows for a niche skill such as crypto trading to be accessible, but has also enabled an improvement in its application.

In the contemporary world, avenues for monetization are a dime a dozen, allowing for individuals to harness skills such as videogame prowess to transform themselves into titans in the realm of what is known as eSports. Social media has been a catalyst for esports, paving the way for average teenagers to hone their skills and monetize them, resulting in a manifestation of a nuanced form of an athlete in a competitive sport. This skill, and the platform to utilize it, has been provided by social media giants such as Facebook and

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YouTube, where videogaming superstars showcase their ability in an ultimate combination of marketing and unadulterated skill on a joystick in order to pull in sponsorships. A prudent example would be the streamer Ninja, who signed a deal with Red Bull in 2018, after cementing himself as one of the best players of the videogame "Fortnite". In this manner, social media has created avenues for individuals to combine gaming skill with entrepreneurship ability, and monetize what one normally does for leisure.

In addition to this, social media has transformed the world into what social media influencer Andrew Tate calls "an attention economy." Today, if one is able to keep the attention of ~~the~~ millions of internet users on themselves, they are able to influence these users using ~~thoughts~~ their personal expression, charisma, and other skills such as viewer retention. Andrew Tate used the social media algorithms to his advantage, and was able to create an online presence across Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Discord in the space of a year following COVID-19. This ultimately resulted in him being amongst the top five most Googled individuals on the planet, as of

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August 2022. By keeping in mind the success of Tate as well as numerous other influencers, it is obvious that it is a highly skill-intensive endeavour to influence millions across the globe, and create a large online following.

Another burgeoning skill often overlooked is content creation. As social media becomes more and more popular, it is increasingly necessary to possess the requisite skills to create and maintain an online presence, especially in the form of attractive videos, pictures, captions, and community engagement, the skills for which are cultivated through the very use of social media. To expound upon this, one may take the example of Coca-Cola, that ran their "Share a Bottle" Coke campaign across multiple platforms, after using social media analytics to accurately determine what campaign would resonate most with their audience. On a smaller scale, individual content creators on platforms such as YouTube and Instagram regularly study analytics in order to determine what style of content triggers maximum engagement with viewers. This includes video thumbnails, editing styles, usage of keywords in captions, and creating family friendly content. In this way, social media impacts content creation

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skills for solo creators to boost engagement.

Social media has also emerged as a transformative force in fostering entrepreneurship skills, providing individuals with unprecedented opportunities to launch and grow their businesses. Platforms like Instagram and Facebook Marketplace offer a global stage for aspiring entrepreneurs to showcase a product and/or service, build a brand identity. An exemplary case is the rise of small businesses leveraging Instagram for e-commerce. As of January 2021, over 90 million businesses were using Instagram. The platform therefore allows entrepreneurs to master skills in digital marketing, customer engagement, and brand building. This shows how skills acquired via social media have dismantled traditional barriers to entrepreneurship.

While the positive impact of social media on skill acquisition is undeniable, it is essential to acknowledge that the narrative is not without its skeptics. The first of these counter-arguments is that knowledge of crypto-currency trading is merely a derivative of stock trading, and was therefore available long before the advent of social media. For example, one may argue that bull, or bear trends in crypto markets can be learned about and recognised by

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studying literature on the stock market. Moreover, skills such as critical thinking, as well as mathematical calculation are not disseminated via social media, which merely exists as a conduit for such information. In this manner, it may be argued that social media cannot claim credit for the spread of crypto-currency trading skills.

Another criticism of the narrative of social media as a source of skills is that the phenomenon of gaming and monetization of gaming is not a legitimate skill. Critics argue that the idea of esports, as well as sponsorships for prominent and successful videogaming personalities, is antithetical and perhaps even insulting towards "true" sports". A sport philosopher and Olympic scholar famously argued that esports, and gaming, did not fit the traditional definition of sport, and therefore was a mere pastime and not a legitimate avenue for competition, much less a career (Jim Parry, E-Sports are not sports, 2019). Therefore, many claim that videogame players, however skilled, have not harnessed a legitimately useful ability, and ~~the~~ the subsequent idea that social media has provided skills for gamers to evolve into superstar faces criticism.

Additionally, it may be argued that social media

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did not pioneer the idea of influencing the public by utilising skills pertaining to available technology. It is argued that such "influencers" have existed all along; it is simply in the contemporary world that being an influencer is termed as a profession as opposed to an adjective. Examples of this are seen in personalities such as Marilyn Monroe, who lived before the time of the internet, and yet shot to fame by virtue of her beauty and fetching on-screen presence in cinema. She was single-handedly able to establish an entire beauty standard for the time, and was therefore as accomplished, if not more, than any influencer today. It could ~~see~~ subsequently be stated that even without social media, charismatic humans found ways to leave their mark upon the world.

A further counter-argument may ~~the~~ claim that content-creation is not a skill-intensive endeavour, and therefore social media cannot be given credit for the phenomenon. It may be claimed that content-creation today requires minimal effort, owing to the deficit in attention spans that is characteristic of social media users. Indeed, a widely cited study conducted by Microsoft found that attention spans had fallen from 12

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seconds in 2000 to just 8 seconds in 2013. This coincided with the explosive success of the video creation platform Vine, which introduced a limit of 6 seconds on each video. The subsequent popularity of Vine, in spite of the low-effort, non-labour-intensive videos that went viral regardless, showed that content creation did not require much skill or expertise, laying low the argument that content creation as a skill was introduced and elevated by social media.

Furthermore, it may be stated that social media did not provide any ~~of~~ additional entrepreneurship skill, and that humans have always been enterprising. Individuals have always found ways to utilize technology at the time to be able to boost sales in business. A highly famous example, and a widely-cited case study, is that of McDonald's, which marketed itself as having cheap and quick service, producing huge quantities of food at low prices, using an "assembly line" style kitchen. The company began as a small diner run by two brothers, and eventually saw itself become a leviathan, as a result of sheer ingenuity. This is simply one of many examples where entrepreneurship and technology combined to create a highly

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profitable result, thereby countering the idea that social media provided any unprecedented skills of entrepreneurship.

In spite of these counter-arguments, a cursory glance is enough to determine that social media's role in the introduction of skills hitherto unseen to the new generation cannot be successfully questioned. Taking the argument about crypto-trading, it is impossible to separate the role of social media in transforming the skill and disseminating it. Many cryptocurrency signals are communicated via ~~Telegram~~ Telegram, whatsapp, and Facebook groups, where mentors teach the techniques for success in the crypto-trading world to hopeful protégés. Social media has allowed for greater accessibility to the world of finance than ever before, and crypto-trading and its associated skills are but one example.

Additionally, the specific skillset required to be good at a videogame and harness the potential of that ability to make oneself an overnight celebrity is ~~social media~~ ^{available} ~~solely through~~ social media, and ~~claims~~ that valued higher today than ever before, and esports is here to stay. Take, for instance, the example of Tyler "Ninja" Blevins, and his gaming streams as ~~discussed~~ previously. Children discussed.

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use social media to analyse the 32-year old's playing style, and quote his kill ratios and moves as if he were LeBron James. In fact, technology consulting firm Activate estimates that more than 250 million people watch esports. (Esports vs. Sports, Syracuse.edu, ²⁰²³~~2022~~) To attempt to delegitimise the skill and ingenuity, as well as entrepreneurship required to draw in these numbers is a poor one. Social media has revolutionised the world of sports, and gaming has become a worldwide phenomenon, thanks to the skills required imparted by social media.

It is also inaccurate to claim that the nature of influencing society, and the skills required to do so have not changed. While many celebrities and famous individuals successfully created "cults of personality" around themselves, they never had the reach, or the communication capability, or the tools that influencers of today possess. Cristiano Ronaldo, by merely moving a Coca Cola bottle out of the way, and replacing it with water at a press conference, caused Coca Cola Co. to lose over \$2 billion in stock value. While Ronaldo is a footballing megastar, his influence exists as a result of careful cultivation and creation, and today, he can cause shockwaves across the world with a seemingly innocuous action. It is

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therefore absurd to equate the scale and the scope of influencers on social media today, to any other time in history.

Another flawed counter-argument, stating that content creation is devoid of skill, is easily dismantled if one takes a glance at the requirements to be a successful content creator. To be considered successful, one must consistently create videos, posts, streams, and engage with the online community. In order to do this, it is imperative to be skilled at knowing how to appeal to the consumer. YouTube algorithm is a prime example. The algorithm shows that bright, vibrant videos of approximately 10 minutes durations are most successful, and that in order to get the viewer to keep watching till the end, the content must be constantly engaging. Content creators use data analysis, viewer feedback, and trial and error to determine what works best for their audience, putting ~~the~~ hours upon hours into video-editing, thumbnail design, and ensuring the content is non-offensive, thereby proving that content creation is an art form, that requires skill to master.

Finally, it is important to establish that social media has introduced elements into

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the realm of entrepreneurship that have transformed it forever. It is not enough to simply exist on social media, and use the technology at hand. The ease of access for businesses has resulted in fierce competition, unlike anything seen before. Businesses pay search engines such as Google, and companies such as Facebook and Instagram, to run advertisements in order to gain an edge over their competitors. As per recent data, Google's top revenue source in 2022 was search ads, bringing in \$162 billion (Google LLC). The world of entrepreneurship has been forever changed, and the skillset needed to survive has evolved as well, and social media is intrinsic to staying afloat as a business in the digital economy, by learning every possible technique social media has to offer.

In conclusion, the evolving landscape of social media has undeniably and irrevocably contributed to the acquisition of various skills, including but not limited to crypto trading, entrepreneurship, influencer marketing, and esports gaming. While critics argue the prolificness of social media is disseminating these skills, the counterarguments are easily dismantled. The above arguments clearly cemented social media as a

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Source of a brand new set of skills,
for a generation born in the most
idiosyncratic time in human history.