

# Web 2.0 is just the virtualised jungle.

## Abstract

This paper is aimed to analyse the influence of web 2.0 social networking platforms such as Facebook, Twitter... on the users both mentally and financially. There are huge number of new online social communities established by web 2.0 technology, the owners and developers of them usually launch original social media platforms for free to entice the maximum users at the beginning stage, however the companies that own the platforms are driven by the capitalist need for profit. Consequently, online social media communities or the individual user is commodified in service of company profits, or they are forged purposely and gradually into a tool to satisfy the political needs. This paper is trying to explore the influences of Web 2.0 social networking platforms from the perspective of the current users to outline to where will users be led by web 2.0 social networking sites or the virtual communities, and how the users should deal with the external control to make the most Web 2.0 social networking sites for more benefits.

## Introduction

The innovation of web 2.0 has been dramatically changing the online communication by providing the various platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram... to be more dynamic and efficient in manners not already conceivable since 2008. The more and more people are becoming addicted to the specific web 2.0 social networking platforms or the virtual communities established on web 2.0 social media platforms, the platforms are designed to engage as many as possible the users, whereby the owners or the companies of the platforms are able to exploit the maximum profits out of the commoditized users. The subjectivity-based Web 2.0 social networking sites are designed with the functions by those the users or owners are enabled to make exponential growth profit much quicker and easier.

## 1. The functions of web 2.0 social networking sites

According to the current critical approaches on social media and communication, the following aspects must be identified : 1) ideologic function (Holzer,1994), 2) the realm of commodification function (Garnham,1990), and 3) “the potential to provide alternative media space for progressive communication and politics” (Downing 2001; Atton,2002), web2.0 as the new form of social media performs both ideology function and the realm of commodification function. Then, how does web 2.0 social media function?

Web 2.0 performs its functions in three main fields: marketing ideology, neoliberal ideology and political ideology. (Fuchs, 2009, p.775). All the users are imperatively influenced by the relevant functions correspondently.

## **2. Neoliberal ideology of web 2.0 social networking sites indoctrinates the users to be more ego-centric, which establish the big pool of individualistic labor.**

The neoliberal individualism function of web 2.0 will seamlessly indoctrinate its users to be radical activist in persuasion of the freedom and individualism. As the common knowledge, both “liberty” and “competition” are the foundation of capitalism. Neoliberal ideology function of Web 2.0 is playing the essential role in seeding the idea of liberty. The users are gradually being forged into the type of people “into a liberal ideal of subjectivity based around notions of freedom, choice activity. (...) The Web 2.0 user thus is represented as both agential and endowed with freedom from externally derived controls. It would seem that the user being addressed in this interactive and participatory media is the ideal, active neoliberal citizen” (Jarrett, 2008). Web 2.0 is constantly and quietly brainwashing its users to believe that Web 2.0 social communities are the place where they can impart themselves online freely – to say whatever they would like to say, to make choices freely – to watch whatever they would like to watch, so “freedom” has become the token of web 2.0 social networking sites, users will naturally believe in what they are doing is representing “freedom. The recent anti-quarantine protests in USA during covid-19 pandemic in April 2020 is the good example of this point. The protestors request the federal government to revoke the stay-at-home restriction, they said that they have the freedom to go to the bars, to go to work, even to get infected by covid-19. Where does their belief in “freedom” come from? Web 2.0 social platforms are the vital source from where people are fostered into neoliberal individualism activists.

The neoliberal individualism function of web 2.0 can possibly keep the users long-term engaged. The users are able to produce the contents on Web 2.0 social networking sites, which makes them ostensibly control the participation on the social media platforms, therefore the users on the social networking sites deeply believe it is his/her real voice on the sites(eg: Facebook), the subjectivity -- based platforms of Web 2.0 strongly emphasizes the individual profile and individual contributes on the platforms. For example, Facebook users are required to create their own profile (eg: personal account) before they can legally interact with other users by posting or commenting, whereby the users are reasonably believe they are the owner of all the contents, by which the individualism is maximumly expanded.

In short, the neoliberal individualism function of web 2.0 has fostered every single user into a liberal advocate who is holding the firm belief of “freedom”, which is the foundation for people to be the real self. But why is Web 2.0 function designed to encourage neoliberal individualism? To have an answer to this, the other function of Web 2.0 needs to be discussed --- marketing ideology.

### **3. Marketing ideology function of Web 2.0 social networking sites is creating the new opportunities for business.**

Marketing ideology function of Web 2.0 arises variety of mode of significant social actions between each and every user on Web 2.0 social networking sites, such as browsing the website, downloading docs, conference meeting, etc, from which the constant huge number of business opportunities were created. As a matter of fact, web2.0 was designed in the beginning of 21 century as the new way to secure the investment in Internet – related business (Fuchs, 2008). Therefore, it was born with the function as marketing strategy. “Web 2.0 would be an overblown marketing attempt” (Reips and Matzat, 2007, p.1). Web2.0 social networking sites provide the new opportunities for the business owners, as they are ostensibly new to people, and able to satisfy the variety of users’ needs, such as making new friends, shopping, education, etc. Despite of the newness of Web 2.0 social media, another native marketing strategy of Web 2.0 is that most of social media is free to use, therefore Web 2.0 stands big chance to expand the market exponentially. In February/March 2005 2% used social networking sites, in August 2006 already 9% (all data: Pew Internet & American Life Project, <http://www.pewinternet.org>, accessed on March 16, 2008). In the UK, 23% of Internet users have made new friends online, 16% posted messages in discussion boards, 29% used chat rooms, and 12% were blogging in 2007 (data: Oxford Internet Survey, OxIS 2007). The arising accumulated web 2.0 users are also the source of content prosumer for business. but why?

Web 2.0 are designed purposely to exploit the free labour for capitalism needs. Web 2.0 seems to be an ideology and a business mode aimed at exploiting free labour (Terranova, 2002). The subjectivity -- based platforms of Web 2.0 strongly emphasizes the individual profile and individual contributes on the platforms, the neoliberal individualism function is constantly offering the perpetual power for turning the audience users into prosumer users. With the contribution from the Web 2.0 free labour, Web 2.0 social media expand the market rapidly with the unconceivable speed. for example, on Youtube, when the audience click on “like” on the stream, the audience commodity accumulates, which composite to the contribution made by prosumer. The “share” action of the stream can be considered as free labour to prosumer, which also composite to the contribution of the original stream owner. Obviously, Web 2.0 is functioning perfectly in exploiting the free labour for the business. web 2.0 functions perfectly not only on exploiting free labour, but also on encourage the co-operations of the labour.

### **4. web 2.0 social networking sites facilitate the users in co-operation.**

Although most social media are free to use and much free labour is available to be exploited, the companies the own and design the platforms are driven by the capitalist need for profit, which consequently determine that social media communities and the labour of users are commodified for co-operation in service of company profits. Since collective labour is much more productive than individual labour in generating the profits, co-operation becomes the foundation element of capitalism.

“A greater number of labourers working together, at the same time, in one place (or, if you will, in the same field of labour), in order to produce the same sort of commodity under the mastership of one capitalist, constitutes, both historically and logically, the starting-point of capitalist production” (Marx, 1867/1967, p.322).

In order to approach the higher profit, the harmonious consensus is essential for the successful co-operation between individuals or communities. “reference is only to the objective fact of a unity based on common traits and activities and other external phenomena” (Tonnies, 1988, p.67). “cohesion” is a very important concept in verify the level of consensus among the interconnected networking members in the co-operation. (Reingen and Kernan, 1986). The level of harmonious consensus is deciding the level of cohesion of the co-operation. Higher cohesion leads to the strong tie relationship among the network members in the co-operation, the members usually have frequent interaction and shared norms, therefore high cohesion is usually more productive. However, complete cohesion is not recommended by some scholars, because it makes some members feeling great tension caused by the uncomfortable social distance. (Bind et al. 2012) The social character of Web 2.0 hugely increases the possibility, frequency, intensity and complexity of social activities, which tremendously expands the cohesion across each the network member’s various social spheres, and stimulates the development of shared norms and trust, as a result the subgroups on the network community will be created. Capitalist will exploit the collective labour from the subgroups to make maximum satisfaction on profits.

Alternatively, weak tie relationship of Web 2.0 social networking sites is also playing the positive role in developing the cohesion for co-operation. The scholars have broadly recognized “ strength of weak ties in facilitating the transfer of information across disparate subgroups within a network” (Granovetter 1973, 1982).

## conclusion

In summary, the neoliberal ideology creates the big pool of individualised crowd for capitalism needs of free labour, marketing ideology have all of them interact one the other to generate the opportunities for capitalism needs of profit. Web 2.0 social networking sites are offers the most and new opportunities for both the owners and users to exploit and accumulate the profits, whoever knows it better will definitely be quicker and smoother to get richer.

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