Facebook Benefits Risks Privacy and Business Value

Posted on September 8, 2023

View this essay online:
https://academic-master.com/facebook-benefits-risks-privacy-and-business-value/

Introduction

Facebook has changed substantially since it began as a university-based networking site in 2004. It is now part of Meta's wider group of services and functions as a social network, messaging environment, video platform, marketplace, advertising channel, community forum, and identity system. That breadth explains why people often evaluate Facebook in contradictory ways. One user may experience it mainly as a place to keep in touch with relatives, while another encounters it through local groups, political discussion, a business page, short-form video, event planning, or online buying and selling. A useful review must therefore examine more than whether the interface is easy to use. It should consider how effectively the platform supports communication, how its business model shapes the user experience, and what risks arise from misinformation, fraud, privacy loss, harassment, and excessive engagement. (Meta, n.d.).

The original review correctly recognized Facebook's versatility and its value to individuals and businesses, but several details require qualification. Meta no longer presents a simple, regularly updated figure for Facebook users in the same way it once reported Facebook monthly active users. Its financial reporting now emphasizes activity across its "Family of Apps," which includes Facebook, Instagram, Messenger, and WhatsApp. Meta reported an average of 3.58 billion family daily active people in December 2025, but that figure must not be described as the number of Facebook users. Similarly, Facebook pages may be opened without a fee, yet successful marketing is not necessarily free because organic reach is limited and many businesses depend on paid promotion. The platform remains influential, but its advantages are inseparable from the commercial and social systems through which it operates.

Development of the Platform

Facebook was launched in February 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg and fellow students at Harvard University. Access initially focused on Harvard and then expanded to other universities before the service opened more broadly. That history matters because the platform's earliest design was based on identifiable social relationships within bounded communities. Over time, the network became global and accumulated functions that went far beyond personal profiles and friend lists. News Feed

reorganized social activity into a continuously updated stream; Pages gave organizations and public figures a formal presence; Groups supported communities built around common interests; Messenger separated much private communication from the public feed; Marketplace enabled local commerce; and video, live broadcasting, stories, and reels adapted Facebook to changes in mobile media (boyd & Ellison, 2007).

The original review treated online games as the platform's most recent and distinctive improvement. Games were once highly visible on Facebook, especially during the period when titles such as FarmVille attracted enormous audiences. They are no longer the defining feature of the service. Facebook's recent development has been shaped more by mobile video, algorithmic recommendations, creator tools, artificial-intelligence systems, commerce, and integration with Meta's wider services. This shift illustrates an important feature of platform businesses: they continually redesign their products in response to competitors, advertiser demand, user behavior, regulation, and changes in technology. A review written at one moment can therefore become outdated quickly.

Communication and Community Benefits

Facebook's strongest continuing advantage is its ability to connect different forms of communication in one place. Users can post text, photographs, links, and videos; organize events; send private messages; follow public pages; and participate in groups. For families dispersed across cities or countries, the service can preserve weak and strong social ties with relatively little effort. A photograph, birthday message, or community update may seem minor, but repeated small exchanges can help people remain aware of one another's lives.

Groups are especially valuable because they organize interaction around a shared need rather than an existing friendship. Neighborhood groups circulate information about road closures, missing pets, local services, and public meetings. Patients and caregivers may find peer support from people facing similar conditions. Students exchange resources, and professional communities discuss opportunities or technical problems. During emergencies, local users can share rapidly changing information. These benefits are not automatic: a group can also spread rumors or become hostile. Even so, the ability to build a community without creating a separate website gives Facebook practical value that is difficult to reproduce through email, television, or traditional print media.

The platform also reduces barriers to public participation. Small organizations can announce events, nonprofit groups can recruit volunteers, and local institutions can communicate directly with residents. However, access should not be confused with equal visibility. Facebook's ranking systems decide which posts are likely to appear prominently, and those decisions are influenced by predicted relevance, engagement, recency, format, and other signals. A person may technically follow a page while seeing only a fraction of its posts. The platform therefore expands opportunities to speak but still controls much of the distribution environment.

Facebook as an Information Environment

Facebook can expose users to educational material, journalism, public-health messages, and expert discussion. It can also make information easier to understand by combining text with images, video, comments, and links. Yet calling the platform an educational hub without qualification ignores a fundamental problem: Facebook does not function like a library or a peer-reviewed journal. Reliable reporting, personal opinion, advertising, satire, manipulated media, and deliberate falsehood can appear in the same visual format.

Users often judge content through social cues such as the identity of the person who shared it, the number of reactions, or the tone of the comments. Those cues can be useful, but popularity is not evidence. Emotionally charged claims may circulate faster than careful corrections, and repeated exposure can make an assertion feel familiar even when it is false. Meta publishes rules and enforcement reports, works with fact-checking and other integrity systems in some contexts, and removes or reduces certain harmful content. No moderation system can reliably prevent every deceptive post, especially at global scale and across languages. The burden therefore falls partly on users to check sources, dates, authorship, and supporting evidence before sharing.

Algorithmic personalization creates another tension. A feed tailored to a person’s interests can save time and make the service feel relevant. The same process may narrow the range of information encountered or repeatedly reinforce material that generates strong reactions. The result is not necessarily a complete “echo chamber,” because people often encounter disagreement online, but the platform’s incentives favor attention. Content that provokes anger, fear, amusement, or moral outrage may perform better than material that is accurate but less emotionally immediate.

Business and Marketing Value

Facebook remains useful to businesses because it combines audience targeting, visual communication, customer interaction, and measurable advertising. A small company can create a page, publish operating hours, display products, answer questions, receive reviews, advertise an event, and direct customers to a website or shop. Local targeting can be particularly helpful for restaurants, service providers, charities, and retailers whose customers are concentrated in a particular area.

The original review implied that Facebook marketing is essentially cost-free. Opening and maintaining a page may not require a platform fee, but the business still pays through labor, content production, customer service, and sometimes advertising. Organic distribution has become less predictable as the platform has grown more crowded and recommendation systems have changed. Paid campaigns can improve reach, yet they introduce additional challenges: advertisers must define audiences, create persuasive material, comply with platform rules, measure conversions, and avoid spending on impressions that do not produce useful outcomes.

Facebook's advertising system can be powerful because it allows businesses to reach people according to location, interests, behavior, and other permitted categories. That precision also creates ethical questions about privacy, discrimination, political influence, and the use of personal data. The Federal Trade Commission's 2019 settlement with Facebook imposed a five-billion-dollar penalty and new privacy requirements after alleging that the company had violated a previous privacy order. The case demonstrates that the platform's commercial value has long depended on data practices that require strong oversight and transparent user controls (Federal Trade Commission, 2019).

Marketplace adds another commercial layer. It makes local buying and selling convenient, especially for second-hand goods, but transactions may occur between strangers without the protections associated with a conventional retailer. Users should examine seller history, avoid suspicious payment requests, protect personal information, and use safe meeting arrangements. Facebook can provide reporting and safety tools, but it cannot guarantee the honesty of every participant.

Privacy, Security, and Personal Risk

Facebook's privacy settings allow users to control some aspects of audience, profile visibility, tagging, and data use. These controls are useful but can be difficult to understand because privacy is not a single switch. A post may be limited to friends while profile information, group activity, comments on public pages, or data collected through advertising systems remains visible in other contexts. Users also reveal information indirectly through likes, contacts, location patterns, photographs, and interactions.

Fraud and impersonation are genuine problems. Criminals may copy profile photographs, create false accounts, send malicious links, advertise nonexistent products, or pretend to be a friend in financial distress. The original review was correct to identify these risks but unrealistic in suggesting that one new feature could prevent crime or compensate all victims. Security requires layered responses: account authentication, automated detection, human review, law-enforcement cooperation, payment safeguards, user education, and rapid reporting. Individuals can reduce risk by enabling two-factor authentication, using a unique password, reviewing active sessions, distrusting urgent requests for money, and confirming unusual messages through another communication channel.

Harassment and cyberbullying present a different challenge because harmful behavior may come from people the victim knows. Blocking, muting, reporting, and audience controls can help, but they do not erase screenshots, repeated contact through new accounts, or the emotional effects of public humiliation. Young users may be particularly vulnerable to social comparison, sleep disruption, unwanted contact, and pressure to remain constantly available. The U.S. Surgeon General has emphasized that social media can offer connection and support while also creating meaningful risks for children and adolescents. The effect depends on age, vulnerability, content, intensity of use, and the quality of offline support (Office of the U.S. Surgeon General, 2023).

User Experience and Overall Evaluation

From a usability perspective, Facebook offers remarkable functional depth, but that depth can make the interface feel crowded. A user may encounter posts from friends, recommended videos, advertisements, group activity, marketplace listings, memories, notifications, and prompts from other Meta services in a single session. People who want a simple chronological record of friends' updates may find the recommendation-heavy experience frustrating. Others appreciate having many tools in one application.

The platform's greatest strength and weakness are therefore closely related. Its enormous network and broad feature set make it useful, but they also produce commercial pressure, moderation difficulties, information overload, and privacy concerns. Leaving the service may reduce some risks, yet it may also disconnect a person from family groups, community notices, customers, or organizations that rely on Facebook as their main public channel. For many users, the realistic choice is not complete acceptance or complete rejection but deliberate, limited use.

A responsible user can improve the experience by pruning the friend and follow lists, turning off unnecessary notifications, checking privacy settings, limiting app permissions, using feed controls, and setting time boundaries. Businesses should treat Facebook as one channel rather than the sole owner of their audience. Maintaining an independent website, customer email list, and records outside the platform reduces dependence on algorithm changes or account restrictions.

Conclusion

Facebook remains an important communication and business platform because it brings personal networking, groups, events, video, messaging, advertising, and local commerce into one system. It can strengthen relationships, support communities, and give small organizations access to audiences that once required expensive media. At the same time, the service is not a neutral public square. Its design is shaped by advertising, data collection, algorithmic ranking, and competition for attention.

The platform should therefore be judged neither as an unquestioned social benefit nor as a single cause of online harm. Its value depends on the purpose for which it is used, the safeguards applied, and the degree to which users understand its limits. Facebook is most beneficial when people use it intentionally, verify information, protect their accounts, and avoid relying on it as their only source of news, community, or commercial access. The platform's continuing influence is undeniable; whether that influence improves a user's life depends partly on choices made by Meta and partly on the habits, institutions, and regulations surrounding its use.

References

boyd, d. m., & Ellison, N. B. (2007). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 13*(1), 210–230. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00393.x

Federal Trade Commission. (2019). *FTC imposes $5 billion penalty and sweeping new privacy restrictions on Facebook*. https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/news/press-releases/2019/07/ftc-imposes-5-billion-penalty-sweeping-new-privacy-restrictions-facebook

Meta Platforms, Inc. (2026). *Fourth quarter and full year 2025 results*. https://investor.atmeta.com/investor-news/press-release-details/2026/Meta-Reports-Fourth-Quarter-and-Full-Year-2025-Results/

Meta. (n.d.). *Community Standards and transparency reporting*. https://transparency.meta.com/

Office of the U.S. Surgeon General. (2023). *Social media and youth mental health: The U.S. Surgeon General's advisory*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.