

## Introducing PJK's Social Networking Model of Motives - From Image Creation to Public Actualisation: Expanding Maslow's Hierarchy in Digital Social Networks



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### ABSTRACT

This paper introduces the **PJK Social Networking Model of Motives**, a **egalitarian model** that is an extension of the needs postulated by Maslow in his Hierarchy of human motives, into the perpetual social networking site usage by the modern human. Four more needs have been added as an emergent quadrant of needs in social media usage. The model postulates the non **hierarchical** nature of these motives, as drawn from the research findings.

This study explores the integration of social networking sites (SNS) within Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (MNH) to understand how these digital platforms fulfil various human needs. By mapping SNS features to Maslow's human needs, this research examines the role of SNS in satisfying the new media needs corresponding to physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualisation needs. The study employs a qualitative analysis of SNS functionalities and user experiences, drawing on existing literature and theoretical frameworks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the psychological and social impacts of digital interactions. The findings of non-participatory and participatory observations, coupled with users and expert focus group discussions, reveal that different features of the SNS are used to satisfy the five levels of Maslow's Pyramid. Some new need levels have emerged from the results of this study: 1. Image Creation and Image Sustenance 2. Public Image Actualisation 3. Know Me Syndrome and 4. Being Good Syndrome. This study provides detailed explanations of the role of SNS features in satisfying the basic five needs and the emergent four needs, for the modern socially networked human. The findings offer insights into the design and development of these platforms to enhance user well-being and satisfaction.

**KEYWORDS:** Social Networking Sites (SNS), Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (MNH), Emerging Digital Needs, Digital Communication, Human Motivation, Social Media, Online Interaction

### INTRODUCTION

#### Placement of 'Social Media' in the 'Hierarchy of Needs'

Social media is the newest entrant in our societies and lives. From being face to face, we have moved to Facebook, from treats to tweets, from real to reels, shopping to online ordering, lectures in class to learning on the apps, our lives have truly become e-fixed. We might wonder, has the reality been sacrificed in this journey to virtuality or has the web widened our horizons? Is it mass media in the true sense of the word? Is it converging, diverging and demassifying us all at the same time?

The so-called new media was thought to be limited to the new generations a few years back, but even the old kids on the block could not escape being in its net. (puns intended) From an aged parent to a polished professor, from an experienced businessman to a resistant government, none could elude the wave. When everything in a society was being wired up, the societies themselves had to come to the screen- be it through your mobile phone or the little tablet. One eagerly awaits the comments, likes, blue ticks, wall posts, birthday reminders et al, only to succumb to the instant urge to reply asap.

No more limited to the teen craze, the need of image creation and sustenance is highly felt even among middle aged users. The lack of moral policing has not prevented the users from displaying socially acceptable behaviours while networking even with the strangers. The journey from hidden identities in chat rooms to the fully detailed biodatas on dating sites has diminished the lines between personal and public. The most interesting finding in this context was that the hidden, the deep, the inner is still unrevealed as per many respondents.

These changes around us have been rapid and inclusive. We have all taken to the social media with open arms and eager minds. This paper explores the reasons behind the success of reach and intensity of the networking sites in light of the Maslow's Need

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Hierarchy Pyramid. The results arrived at, using the two-fold methodology of focused group discussions and observations have interestingly revealed that the need of belongingness is not the only motive served, it trends to the higher levels of security, self-actualisation and four new non-hierarchical motives emerged. This study attempts to evaluate the postulates of the social psychologists against the relationship of an individual with the social media. Advantages or disadvantages of such developments are not debated here.

### **Mysteries of Social Media**

Social media despite all its openness is as mysterious as its users. We have become patients of non-patience, eagerly awaiting reactions to our pictures and posts. With the principle of Six degrees of acquaintance, it seems that everyone will know everyone else on the social media. But researchers are intrigued by the questions of, Afterall: 'How much more is actually more?' 'How close is close enough?' 'How much Need is finally needed?' 'What are these needs?' 'Is it an anchor that keeps us hooked to the Social networks?' 'Who are we?' 'What is that Anchor?'

This mass of users who are individual and yet grouped together on the networking sites, seeks to fulfil some desires, some needs, some wants, thorough this constant networking. The present study seeks to explore what these needs are in the framework of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

### **Background**

Social networking sites (SNS) have transformed the landscape of human interaction, providing platforms for communication, self-expression, and community building. These platforms have become integral to daily life, influencing how individuals connect, share information, and perceive themselves and others. As of recent statistics, billions of people globally engage with SNS, highlighting their pervasive role in modern society. Popular platforms like Instagram and Facebook have woven these networks into the fabric of our daily lives, transcending geographical, cultural, and social boundaries. This pervasive presence prompts a deeper examination of the underlying motivations driving individuals to participate in these digital arenas. This study explores the integration of SNS within the framework of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (MNH), a psychological theory that categorises human needs into a hierarchical structure from basic physiological needs to the pursuit of self-actualisation.

### **Concepts**

#### **Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs**

Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, introduced in 1943, remains a foundational theory in psychology and human motivation. Maslow proposed that human needs are arranged in a hierarchy, starting with physiological needs such as food and shelter, followed by safety needs, love and belonging needs, esteem needs, and culminating in self-actualisation needs. Each level of the hierarchy builds on the one below it, with higher needs becoming prominent once lower needs are satisfied. The theory posits that human behaviour is motivated by the fulfilment of these needs, progressing from basic physiological requirements to more complex psychological desires for self actualisation.

- Abraham H Maslow
- A Theory of Human Motivation
  - 1943
  - Book: Toward a Psychology of Being
- Hierarchy of Needs
  - 1954
  - Book: Motivation and Personality
- Human beings are motivated by unsatisfied needs



### Social Networking Sites

A social networking service is an online service, platform, or site that focuses on building and reflecting of social networks or social relations among people, who, for example, share interests and/or activities. A social network service consists of a representation of each user (often a profile), his/her social links, and a variety of additional services. Most social network services are web-based and provide means for users to interact over the Internet, such as e-mail and instant messaging

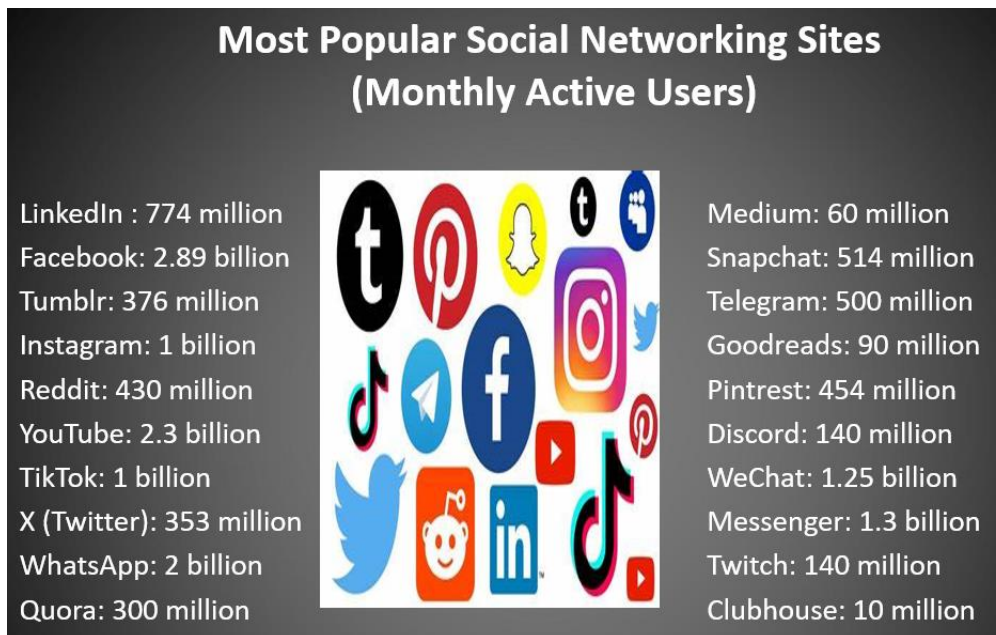
SNS platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn offer diverse features that cater to different aspects of human needs. These platforms facilitate communication, provide a sense of community, offer opportunities for self-promotion and validation, and enable users to pursue interests and hobbies. The ubiquity and versatility of SNS make them a compelling subject for analysing their impact on human psychological needs.

In the context of social networking, these platforms can be seen as contemporary tools that facilitate the satisfaction of various human needs outlined by Maslow. From seeking basic connections (akin to physiological needs) to achieving a sense of belonging, esteem, and even self-actualisation, SNSs serve as modern conduits for fulfilling these needs in a digital landscape.

They are not devoid of **concerns** of dangers in their usage. Some of the major ones intriguing researchers are:

- Privacy
- Access to information
- Potential for misuse
- Impersonation and Role Playing
- Risk for child safety
- Trolling: Emotional abuse
- Online bullying
- Psychological effects of social networking
- Data Theft
- Virus

Despite Concerns, we use the social networking highly to network. Below is the data on the extent of usage of SNSs. (Social Pilot, 2023, Dec)



### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The integration of SNS into everyday life is undeniable. These platforms are not just a medium for communication but have evolved into significant socio-cultural phenomena influencing individual and collective behaviours. The role of SNS in shaping social interactions, influencing self-perception, and fostering community engagement necessitates an academic inquiry into their impact, particularly through the theoretical framework of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

This study aims to explore the placement of social networking within Maslow's hierarchy, investigating how these platforms fulfil various human needs and the implications of such fulfilment on individual behaviour and social structures. By employing a multi-method approach comprising focused group discussions and observations, this research seeks to uncover the motivations behind SNS usage and the resultant psychological and social outcomes.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This section reviews the existing literature on the intersection of social networking sites (SNS) and human needs/motivations, from different perspectives. Previous studies have extensively examined the relationship between social networking and psychological well-being. Research has highlighted the dual nature of SNS, where they offer both positive and negative impacts on users' mental health and social behaviours.

#### **Human Motives behind Digital Engagement**

Human motives behind digital engagement are multifaceted, encompassing aspects such as relevance, meaning, motivation, and a sense of agency (Light, A., 2011). Research emphasises that successful web applications are not just used but engaged with, with users investing time, attention, and emotion into them (Lalmas, M., 2012). The Motivation, Engagement, and Thriving in User Experience (METUX) model highlights the importance of considering psychological needs in technology design to enhance motivation, engagement, and user wellbeing (Peters, D., et al, 2018). Additionally, the educational use of digital mind games with primary school students reveals that genuine engagement in learning activities is linked to possessing the necessary skills and cognitive capacities, while cognitive overload can hinder motivation (Ott, M., et al, 2010). Understanding these factors is crucial for designing digital experiences that effectively motivate and engage users in a digitally mediated society.

#### **Importance of Recognition and Affiliation**

Recognition and affiliation are crucial for human beings as they shape individuals' identities, social interactions, and overall well-being. The concept of recognition, as discussed by various authors (Obradović, S., 2022; Ikäheimo, H., 2009 & 2022), highlights the significance of being acknowledged and accepted by others, whether in legal, social, or personal contexts. Lack of recognition can lead to feelings of exclusion and reduced self-worth, motivating individuals to seek acknowledgment and validation from their social environment (Ikäheimo, H., 2009). Additionally, affiliation, as emphasised in another study (Anthony, et al, 2018), fulfils individuals' fundamental need for acceptance and appreciation within their teams or organisations, reinforcing their sense of belonging and value. Overall, recognition and affiliation play integral roles in human behaviour, identity formation, and social interactions, ultimately contributing to individuals' psychological and emotional well-being.

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## Social Network Addictions

Social media addiction is a prevalent issue among youth due to various factors. The addiction to social media networks can be attributed to the excessive use of platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp, leading to a growing dependency on these platforms for emotional fulfilment and information sharing (Pallathadka, H, et al, 2022). Weakness in acquiring life skills, such as problems in socialising, resiliency, and problem-solving, plays a significant role in individuals' addiction to social media, leading to health-threatening behaviours (Chegeni, M., et al, 2021). Additionally, structural capital (social network ties), relational capital (trust in SNSs and members, social identification), and cognitive capital (shared language and goals) influence stickiness, which in turn affects addiction, with privacy concerns and perceived security acting as moderators in this relationship (Chang, I-C., & Liu, C-C. (2023). The pleasurable and rewarding experiences derived from social networking sites contribute to compulsive motivation and habitual use, ultimately leading to addiction (2022, Study in Journal of the Association for Information Systems).

## Maslow's Need Hierarchy and Social Media

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory can be applied to social networking by understanding how these platforms fulfil various human needs. Social networks like Facebook and Twitter have rapidly gained popularity, offering users a sense of belonging, social interaction, and self-esteem fulfilment. (Secara, D., 2015). These platforms create virtual communities where individuals can connect based on common interests, work, or knowledge, satisfying their social needs (Masic, I., et al, 2012). Additionally, social networks provide a platform for sharing information, knowledge, and communication, which align with Maslow's concepts of esteem and self-actualisation. (Mary, K. H., 2008). Moreover, the use of steganographic methods to protect graphic information on social networks highlights the importance of security and privacy, addressing the need for safety in Maslow's hierarchy (Kennedy, K. T., 2022). By integrating Maslow's theory with social networking, we can better understand how these platforms cater to fundamental human needs in the digital age.

## Theoretical Perspectives

The literature review integrates findings from studies on SNS and psychological well-being, using theories such as Uses and Gratifications Theory, Social Identity Theory, and Self-Determination Theory to frame the analysis that help explain why and how individuals use SNS to meet their needs, offering a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between digital platforms and human motivation.

- **Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT):** UGT posits that users actively seek out media that meet their various needs, making it highly relevant to understanding how SNS fulfil different levels of Maslow's hierarchy. (Taylor, P., & Harris, J. (2007).  
This theory explains why individuals choose specific media platforms to satisfy their psychological and social needs.
- **Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979):** This theory suggests that individuals derive part of their identity from the social groups they belong to. SNS provide a space for users to express their identities and connect with like-minded individuals, fulfilling their esteem and belonging needs. (Baran, S. J., & Davis, D. K., 2016).  
The theory supports the idea that online communities on SNS can significantly impact users' sense of identity and social belonging.
- **Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000):** This theory focuses on the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations that drive human behaviour. It posits that the fulfilment of autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs is crucial for psychological growth (Stevenson, N., 2002).  
SNS platforms cater to these needs by providing tools for self-expression, skill development, and social interaction.
- **Networked Publics Theory (Mizuko Ito, 2008):** This theory examines how social media platforms create spaces for public interaction and discourse. (Rosenberry, J., & Vicker, L. A., 2017).  
It highlights how SNS facilitate the formation of networked publics, where users can engage in collective activities and discussions, fulfilling their social and community needs.
- **Social capital theory (SCT)** was first defined by Bourdieu (1985) as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition". (Fiorini, et al, 2018) Social capital theory explores the benefits derived from social networks, such as trust, cooperation, and mutual support.  
SNS enhance social capital by enabling users to build and maintain relationships, access information, and gain social support, thus fulfilling various needs in Maslow's hierarchy.

## Gaps in the Literature

While there is extensive research on SNS and its impact on psychological well-being, there is a gap in studies that explicitly map SNS features to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. This study aims to fill that gap by providing a detailed analysis of how specific SNS

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functionalities align with different levels of Maslow's Hierarchy. Additionally, the rapid evolution of SNS platforms necessitates ongoing research to understand how new features and trends impact users' psychological needs.

Also, apart from the five need hierarchies postulated by Maslow, seven decades ago, the research field has not attempted any exploration of new needs, emerging out of the changing social and environmental arena. **This research makes an attempt to fill this gap and look at emergent needs being created and catered to by the SNSs.**

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

### 1. To investigate the role of social networking sites in fulfilling various levels of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

This objective seeks to understand how SNS serves as a medium for satisfying basic to complex human needs, from physiological connections to self-actualisation.

### 2. To analyse the psychological and social outcomes of SNS usage based on the fulfilment of these needs.

This involves examining the impact of meeting these needs on users' mental health, self-esteem, and social behaviours, particularly focusing on the positive and negative consequences.

### 3. To explore the emergence of new hierarchical levels in Maslow's framework influenced by digital interactions on SNS.

This objective aims to identify any novel needs or motivations that arise uniquely within the digital context of social networking, such as image creation and sustenance.

## METHODOLOGY

The study employs a qualitative analysis of SNS features, mapping them to Maslow's hierarchy to understand their role in fulfilling different human needs. Data drawn from user experiences, platform functionalities, and existing literature on the psychological impacts of SNS, is supported by primary qualitative research through observations and focus group discussions with users and experts.

### Research Design

This study employs a qualitative approach, combining data from observations and focus group discussions to comprehensively understand the phenomena. The research design includes:

- **Focus Group Discussions:** Users and Experts
- **Observations:** Participatory and Non-Participatory

### Sampling

**Purposive sampling:** technique was used to select participants for focus group discussions and observations.

The sample comprised diverse groups of users from varied demographics and experts including psychologists, sociologists, advertising professionals, and teachers, ensuring a wide range of perspectives.

## RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

### Fulfilment and Emergence of Human Needs in the Digital Age: Analysing Social Networking Sites Through Maslow's Lens

The results are divided into two sections. 1. Exploration of the features of Social Networking Sites, that fulfil the five Need levels postulated by Maslow's Hierarchy in 1954. 2. Analysis of the new Needs that emerged for the results of the study, catering to the evolved social networked human of 2024.

### Section 1. Revisiting Maslow's Hierarchy with Social Networking Sites' Features

This section presents the study's findings, which explore the relationship between **Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (MNH)** and the feelings generated by **Social Networking Sites (SNS)**. Each level of Maslow's hierarchy is discussed in relation to specific features of SNS, illustrating how these digital platforms fulfil various human needs.

#### Level 1.

##### MNH: Physiological Needs

Physiological needs are the most basic human necessities, such as food, water, and shelter. In the context of social networking, these needs translate into fundamental communication requirements and the establishment of initial social connections.

**Corresponding New Age Need:** Basic Social Interaction

##### SNS: The 'Checked' Feeling

In social networking, the 'checked' feeling relates to the basic interaction functions provided by these platforms. This includes activities such as logging in, checking notifications, and connecting with new and existing friends. It reflects the human need for basic social interaction and the assurance that they are part of a larger network.

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## Fulfilling Features

- **Friend Finders:** Tools that help users discover and connect with new and existing friends.
- **Share and Invite:** Functions that allow users to share content and invite others to join their network.
- **Basic Interaction Tools:** Messaging systems, comment sections, and likes that facilitate initial communication.

These features satisfy the basic physiological need for interaction, ensuring users can connect and communicate effectively.

## Level 2.

### MNH: Safety and Security Needs

Safety needs pertain to the desire for security in various aspects of life, including financial stability, health, and protection from harm. Within the digital realm, this translates to the need for safe and secure online interactions.

**Corresponding New Age Need:** Safe and secure online interactions

### SNS: The 'Wikied' Feeling

The 'wikied' feeling in social networking sites corresponds to the collaborative and informative nature of these platforms, where users share knowledge and support each other, fostering a sense of security and community.

## Fulfilling Features

- **Privacy Settings:** Allow users to control who can see their information and how it is shared.
- **Tagging and Groups:** Features that enable users to organise their social connections and ensure interactions occur within trusted circles.
- **Search Functions:** Provide users with the ability to find reliable information and connect with others who can offer support and security.

These features help users feel secure in their online interactions, providing a controlled environment where they can share and receive information safely.

## Level 3.

### MNH: Love and Belonging Needs

Love and belonging needs involve forming intimate relationships and being part of a community. In the realm of social networking, these needs are fulfilled through interactions that foster a sense of connection and community.

**Corresponding New Age Need:** Sense of connection and community

### SNS: The 'Accepted' Feeling

The 'accepted' feeling on SNS platforms relates to the affirmation users receive from their online communities, making them feel part of a collective.

## Fulfilling Features

- **Real-Time Web and Cloud Computing:** Enable users to interact and share experiences in real-time, enhancing the sense of belonging.
- **Friendship and Family Connections:** Tools that help users maintain close relationships with friends and family.
- **Interpersonal Communication:** Messaging, commenting, and sharing functions that facilitate ongoing interaction and relationship-building.

These features cater to the human need for belonging, enabling users to form and maintain meaningful relationships within their digital communities.

## Level 4.

### MNH: Esteem Needs

Esteem needs involve the desire for respect, recognition, and self-esteem. Social networking platforms offer numerous ways for users to seek validation and build their self-esteem through interactions and feedback from their peers.

**Corresponding New Age Need:** Seeking validation

### SNS: The 'Liked' Feeling

The 'liked' feeling is derived from the recognition and positive reinforcement users receive from others on social networking sites, boosting their self-esteem.

## Fulfilling Features

- **Positive Notifications:** Likes, shares, and comments that provide users with instant feedback and validation.
- **Status and Fame:** Tools that allow users to showcase their achievements and gain recognition within their networks.
- **User-Generated Content:** Platforms that enable users to create and share their own content, enhancing their sense of accomplishment and recognition.

These features help users build self-esteem by providing a platform for self-expression and recognition from their peers.

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## Level 5.

### MNH: Self-Actualisation Needs

Self-actualisation represents the pinnacle of Maslow's hierarchy, where individuals seek to realise their full potential and achieve personal growth. Social networking sites provide avenues for users to express their creativity, engage in problem-solving, and pursue their passions.

**Corresponding New Age Need:** Expression of Creativity

### SNS: The 'Creator' Feeling

The 'creator' feeling on SNS platforms is associated with the opportunities they provide for users to generate content, express themselves, and achieve a sense of fulfilment.

### Fulfilling Features

- **User-Generated Content:** Platforms that enable users to create and share their own work, from writing to visual art.
- **No Gate Keeping:** Allows users to publish their content without traditional media barriers.
- **Self-Expression Tools:** Features that enable users to personalise their profiles and share their unique perspectives.

These features support self-actualisation by providing a space for users to pursue their interests and showcase their talents.

## Section 2. Emergent Needs in Digital Spaces:

**New Non-Hierarchical Level(s) emerged:** The results of the research are unique as they contribute to the literature, by suggesting certain new needs satisfied by the social networking sites, in addition to those postulated by the Maslow's Hierarchy.

The analysis of the data collected with the help of observations and users and expert focus group discussions revealed that even beyond the five need levels theorised by Maslow, the modern human has many more motives that push him/her towards social networks.

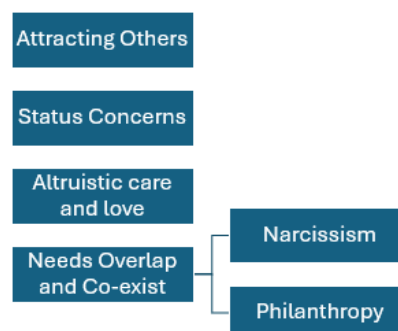
The addictions, the anxiety, the FOMO, all are propagated by needs of being known, valued, appreciated, and above all, by the push of altruism. The modern man hooked to the internet is not struggling for the basic 'roti, kapda aur makaan' (food, clothing and shelter) i.e. the physiological, safety, security needs, he want to go beyond his means and help others and is crazy to be known for his goodness. Let us explore the new needs that emerged out of this study:

### New Need 1. Image Creation & Image Sustenance

Creating an Image in the Public eye and living up to it every day, with every post: By constantly posting reels on Instagram and pictures of vacations on Facebook, putting the happy moments as status on WhatsApp, the users are more concerned about sharing their good memories with others, than living in the moment. The Status updates are meant to attract others, garner likes, elicit comments.

If one does a good deed and it remains only to oneself, it is useless for the socially networked human. A recognition or an act of altruism, all must become known to the world. Philanthropy has become another tool of self-advocacy. Self-love to the extent of narcissism is visible in the use of filters for putting out one's best (better than the best) self forward for the world to see, not only see- appreciate.

## IMAGE CREATION & IMAGE SUSTENANCE



### New Need 2. Public Self Actualisation

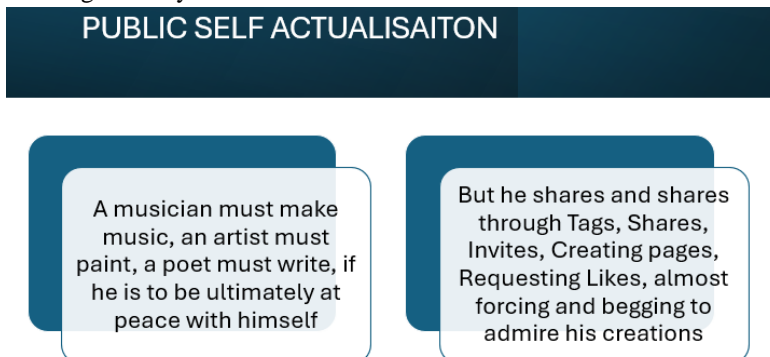
**Self Actualisation not for the Self ACTUALLY:** This syndrome has gripped all and sundry on social media. If I am good, be it. It is no use being good at my trait unless the public knows it.



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In the world of Ayn Rand, we are all striving to be **Peter Keating and not Howard Roark**. (Reference: Ayn Rand (novel, The Fountain Head), has characters **Peter Keating**, who lives only for fame and the approval of others, good-looking and commercially successful, but thrives on fear of being forgotten and Howard Roark, a brilliant architect of absolute integrity, has friends and colleagues, but relies on himself alone).

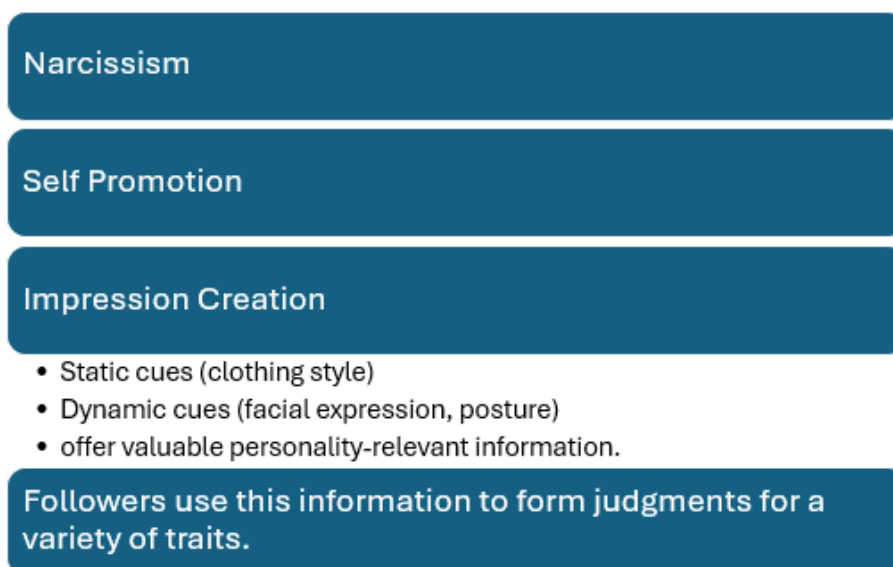
The study observed, that the SNS user is not achieving or creating for himself, but for the consumption of others. His actualisation is not in the creation, but in the recognition by others.



### New Need 3. Know Me Syndrome

**The users' account on SNSs are used as their alter ego.** From using filters on the pictures to posing in rented dresses, the impression of an ideal rich self must be retained. In the rising world of the social media influencers, sponsored vacations, sponsored clothes, sponsored make up and accessories, are all a reality. Results suggest that followers use these visual cues as information to form judgments for a variety of traits. Hence, all the self-love is not for nothing. The grooming efforts are an important step towards this image creation of one's ideal self.

## KNOW ME SYNDROME



### New Need 4. Being Good Syndrome

**Altruism has new wings:** users share need based posts and fellow users flock to help. The communities on social media have given an easy opportunity to everyone who cares, to contribute. During Covid 19, donations came pouring in, through social media sites. The community behaviour is at its top game. Virtual communities stand by each other. Virtual friends come in to help. SNS has given rise to this need to be Useful, actually useful to others

# BEING GOOD SYNDROME

01

Power of the social networking model for philanthropy

02

These communities of hypertexts allow for the sharing of information and ideas

03

Groups that share common interests or affiliations, upload or stream live videos, and hold discussions in forums

### Section 3. Other User Traits

The results of the study also brought to light, certain unique traits of the users:

**Users make responsible choices with the information they share online:** With rising piracy and privacy concerns, most users understand the risks of unauthorised sharing of information. They engage in responsible information sharing. Though phishing and scams are common, the users have become careful.

**Limit access to their profiles:** It was found that users use the privacy settings on the SNSs to limit who can see what of their information. Profile info, pictures, time line, status, viewership all are decided and put through varied settings limiting access to private information.

**Reduced Attention Spans:** Users with extensive viewing of reels or short form videos are used to surfing through hundreds of pieces in an hour. Their attention spans have reduced. Long educational videos or even long conversations are tough for them to handle. Users reported getting fidgety if an office meeting drags.

The rise of pocket films, promoted on social media are an evidence of this trait. Long three-hour film formats have given way to short 10-to-30-minute entertainment pieces. Short podcasts, reels, pocket films, small videos, reduced spans of video lectures, are all testimony to this reduced attention span, thanks to social media content.

**Live for the Moment:** Memories are short, and present is too much. Click selfies and post them, relay real time videos of a family function, talk on a Zoom meeting or arrange a group call for old classmates, social media has made it all possible. Users certified to have rarely gone through old albums, they are happier or rather busier with the content being shared in the present.

**Age is a Differentiating Factor:** While younger users relish the opportunities to recreate continuously a highly decorated, stylistically elaborate identity, older users favour a plain aesthetic that foregrounds their links to others, thus expressing a notion of identity lived through authentic relationships

### Irony

Some ironical results emerged:

- Mediated Relationships are more
- Intimate friendships are less
- Weak, low commitment ties among social media friends compared to the real-life friends
- False sense of connection that ultimately increases loneliness. Many respondents revealed to have gone for therapy sessions at least once. Despite having hundreds of friends on social media, they are not able to find even one friend to talk to when feeling lonely.

Responses tend to be of puzzled dismay regarding a generation that, supposedly, has many friends but little sense of privacy and a narcissistic fascination with self-display

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## The Final Word

- Fundamental human needs are non-hierarchical
- Need to belong exists at all times
- Independence not Freedom
- **The Magic Word is 'Link'**

We can summarise the findings in the words of, Sherry Turkle, Founder Director of MIT Initiative on Technology and Self: "Networked, we are together, but so lessened are our expectations of each other that we feel utterly alone. And there is the risk that we come to see others as objects to be accessed - and only for the parts we find useful, comforting, or amusing. We nurture friendships on social-networking sites and then wonder if they are among friends. We become confused about companionship."

## DISCUSSION

### Key Findings

The study's findings reveal that SNS significantly fulfil various levels of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. At the basic level, these platforms facilitate physiological connections by providing a medium for communication and interaction. Moving up the hierarchy, SNSs meet safety and security needs through features such as privacy settings and secure communication channels.

For love and belongingness, SNSs enable users to form and maintain relationships, providing a sense of community and belonging. Esteem needs are addressed through features that allow users to gain recognition and self-esteem, such as likes, shares, and comments. At the pinnacle, self-actualisation needs are fulfilled as users' express creativity, spontaneity, and problem-solving through user-generated content and personal branding.

### Interpreting the Results in the Context of Maslow's Hierarchy

The study's findings clearly illustrate how SNS platforms fulfil the various levels of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. By offering features that align with each level of the hierarchy, SNS platforms cater to a wide range of human motivations, from basic communication to self-actualisation.

The results highlight that the need for belongingness is a primary driver for SNS usage, aligning with Maslow's third tier. However, the study also uncovers that SNS usage extends to higher levels of the hierarchy, including esteem and self-actualisation needs. Additionally, a new hierarchical level of 'image creation' has emerged, where users engage in self-promotion and impression management, indicating a shift in traditional needs fulfillment.

### Linking Findings to Literature and Theories

The alignment of SNS functionalities with Maslow's hierarchy supports existing literature that highlights the psychological impact of social networking. Studies have shown that SNS platforms significantly influence users' self-esteem, sense of belonging, and overall mental health (Obradović, S., 2022) and Ikäheimo, H., 2022). This research extends these findings by mapping specific SNS features to Maslow's needs, providing a nuanced understanding of how these platforms impact users psychologically.

### Implications of the Findings

The implications of these findings are far reaching. For individuals, understanding the role of SNS in fulfilling their psychological needs can lead to more mindful and balanced use of these platforms. For developers and policymakers, these insights can guide the design of SNS features that promote positive psychological outcomes and mitigate potential harms.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings, several recommendations emerge:

1. **Enhance Privacy and Security Features:** To address safety needs, SNS platforms should continue to improve privacy settings and security measures, ensuring users feel safe in their online interactions.
2. **Promote Positive Interactions:** To support esteem needs, platforms should focus on features that encourage positive reinforcement and constructive feedback, helping users build self-esteem in healthy ways.
3. **Foster Authentic Connections:** To meet love and belonging needs, SNS platforms should emphasise tools that facilitate genuine relationships and community building, reducing the emphasis on superficial interactions.
4. **Support Creative Expression:** To aid self-actualisation, SNS platforms should provide robust tools for user-generated content, enabling users to pursue their passions and express themselves freely.

## Introducing PJK's Social Networking Model of Motives - From Image Creation to Public Actualisation: Expanding Maslow's Hierarchy in Digital Social Networks

This study demonstrates the integral role of SNS in fulfilling various human needs, highlighting the importance of these platforms in contemporary society. By aligning SNS features with Maslow's hierarchy, this research provides a framework for understanding the psychological impact of social networking and offers practical recommendations for enhancing user well-being.

### OUTCOME

This study elucidates the critical role of social networking sites in fulfilling various levels of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. From basic physiological connections to complex self-actualisation desires, SNSs have become essential tools in modern needs fulfilment. The importance of this study lies in its comprehensive examination of SNS usage through the lens of Maslow's theory, providing valuable insights into the motivations behind digital interactions and their psychological and social implications.

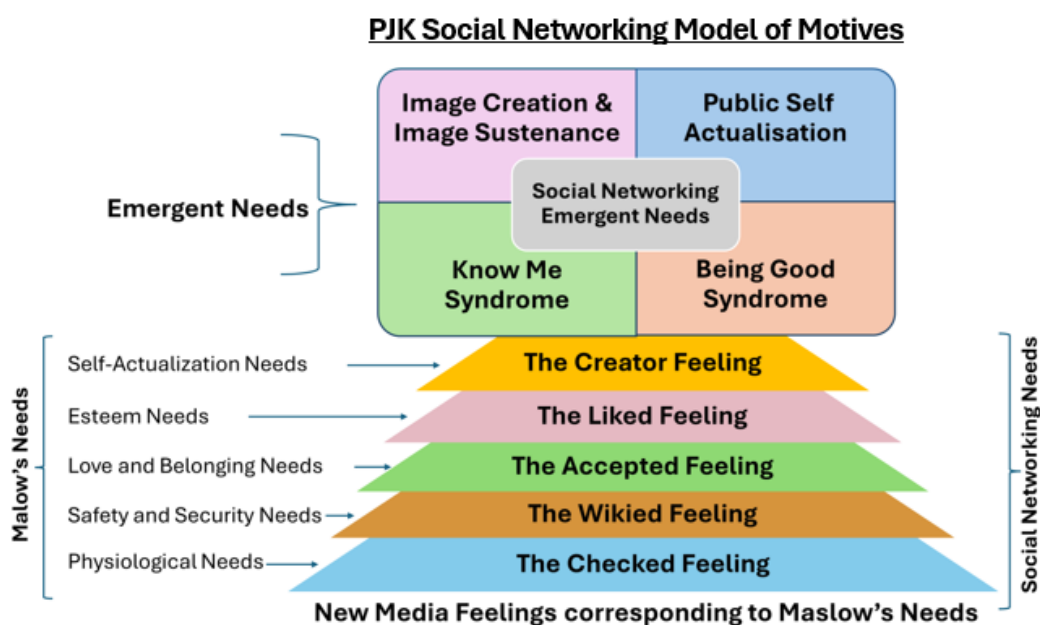
Future research should delve deeper into the new hierarchical levels introduced by SNS, exploring their long-term impact on individual and societal well-being. Additionally, studies should investigate strategies to enhance the positive outcomes of SNS usage while mitigating its potential drawbacks.

The research findings lead us to a model of the motives behind social networking. The paper seeks to introduce this model below, as a recommendation to future researchers and scholars.

### DERIVING PJK SOCIAL NETWORKING MODEL OF MOTIVES

The findings and implications of this research, draw us towards an expansion of the Maslow's Need Hierarchy Pyramid into the New World of the New Media and Social Networking Sites. It introduces us to a new model, that we shall call – the PJK's Social Networking Model of Motives, in name of the author Padmini Jain Kheterpal (PJK)

Below, is the pictorial representation of this model.



The explanations behind each element included in the above diagram emerge from the results of the research and are given in the above sections. These new Feelings and are postulated as **non-hierarchical**. Each **co exists** with all the other feelings and motives. The **nine motives** (five corresponding to Maslow's translation into the new media and four emergent) are what prompt the modern networked human to spend hours on the social media, to sacrifice sleep and outing time for browsing reels and videos of the unknown, to crave for likes and comments, to want to turn into an influencer with growing follower base and to sit for hours with the phone or computer only to engage in the social networking. All the nine proposed motives are co existential. They can be aspired for and achieved all at a time and do not need the step-by-step approach.

The author proposes this model based upon the implications drawn from the results of the study.

This paper concludes with the unveiling of this new proposed model.

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