

THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING

Departmental Research Seminar

The Social Media Penalty Effect By



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Date : 16 May 2025 (Friday)
Time : 10:30 am – 12 noon
Venue : GH120c, PolyU

Abstract

Internet users spend an average of 151 minutes per day using social media applications. Accordingly, people often observe or learn about other people's social media usage habits. Across eight experiments, we demonstrate that those who browse social media are judged negatively by others. We found that social media users are perceived as having lower self-control, which leads to negative downstream consequences in contexts where self-control is important, such as being less likely to be chosen as a task partner, service provider, or long-term romantic partner. Importantly, we found that there is no actual correlation between social media use and self-control. This social media penalty effect is attenuated when self-control is irrelevant, such as when selecting a short-term romantic partner, or when one restricts their social media use. Finally, we demonstrate an intervention where once people are prompted to take an observer's perspective, they are motivated to restrict their own social media use. These findings have implications for service providers, social media companies, and the public by revealing the social cost of using social media.

Prof. Neeru Paharia is professor of marketing at the W. P. Carey School of Business. She conducts research on consumer behavior, branding, sustainability, and political consumption. Prior to joining ASU, Prof. Paharia was a tenured faculty member at Georgetown University. Prior to that she was the research director for the Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics at Harvard University. She also spent three years on the founding team at Creative Commons serving as assistant and executive director, after working at McKinsey as an associate consultant. She has cofounded several community-oriented social networking sites in education, research, and music including Peer 2 Peer University (p2pu.org), Acawiki.org, and ccmixter.org. Prof. Paharia holds a doctorate in marketing from Harvard Business School, a master's degree in public policy and management from Carnegie Mellon University, and a bachelor's degree in economics from the University of California, Davis.

All interested are welcome.



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