

Study: Facebook makes users envious, dissatisfied

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In a joint research study conducted by the Department of Information Systems of the TU Darmstadt (Prof. Dr. Peter Buxmann) and the Institute of Information Systems of the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (Dr. Hanna Krasnova), Facebook members were surveyed regarding their feelings after using the platform. More than one-third of respondents reported predominantly negative feelings, such as frustration. The researchers identified that envying their "Facebook friends" is the major reason for this result. Project manager Dr. Hanna Krasnova, who is currently a post-doctoral researcher at the Humboldt-Universität, explained that, "Although respondents were reluctant to admit feeling envious while on Facebook, they often presumed that envy can be the cause behind the frustration of "others" on this platform - a clear indication that envy is a salient phenomenon in the Facebook context.

Indeed, access to copious positive news and the profiles of seemingly successful 'friends' fosters social comparison that can readily provoke [envy](#). By and large, [online social networks](#) allow users unprecedented access to information on relevant others - insights that would be much more difficult to obtain offline." Those who do not engage in any active, interpersonal communications on social networks and primarily utilize them as sources of information, e.g. reading friends' postings, checking news feeds, or browsing through photos, are particularly subject to these painful experiences.

Envyng Facebook friends leads to a vicious "envy spiral"

Another result of the survey was that about one-fifth of all recent online/offline events that had provoked envy among the [respondents](#) took place within a Facebook context. This reveals a colossal role of this platform in users' [emotional life](#). Paradoxically, envy can frequently lead to users embellishing their Facebook profiles, which, in turn, provokes envy among other users, a phenomenon that the researchers have termed "envy spiral."

The leading online and offline envy provokers in Germany are related to "Travel and Leisure". As Dr. Thomas Widjaja of the TU-Darmstadt, who was also involved in the project, put it, "This is a result of numerous vacation photos posted on Facebook, which are particularly popular among German users."

Facebook envy fosters dissatisfaction

Based on the survey data, the researchers were also able to establish a negative link between the envy that arises while on Facebook and users' general life satisfaction. Indeed, passive use of Facebook heightens invidious emotions that, in turn, adversely affect users' satisfaction with their lives. Coauthor Helena Wenninger of the TU-Darmstadt argued that, "Considering the fact that Facebook use is a worldwide phenomenon and envy is a universal feeling, a lot of people are subject to these painful consequences."

The results of the survey will be presented at the "11th International Conference Wirtschaftsinformatik ([Information Systems](#))" to be held in Leipzig, Germany, February 27 through March 1, 2013. The researchers plan to conduct a follow-on survey that will explore the effects of

Facebook use on envy and its consequences within various cultures.

More information: [warhol.wiwi.hu-berlin.de/~hkra ...
ng_Research_files/WI
%202013%20Final%20Submission%20Krasnova.pdf](http://warhol.wiwi.hu-berlin.de/~hkra...ng_Research_files/WI%202013%20Final%20Submission%20Krasnova.pdf)

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