

A STUDY ON IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON VIRTUAL YOGA COMMUNITY

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Abstract:

The yoga community on social media refers to the network of individuals, yoga practitioners, instructors, influencers and studios who engage with and share yoga related content on various social media platforms. This community encompasses people of all levels of experience and can be found on platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, etc. Within the yoga community on social media, you'll find a wide range of content, such as Yoga Pose Demonstrations, Yoga Challenges, Inspirational Quotes and Messages, Educational Content, etc. The yoga community on social media fosters connections, supports learning, and provides inspiration for practitioners around the world. However, as with any online community, it's essential to approach social media with caution and critically evaluate the information and content shared to ensure a safe and positive experience. When it comes to Yoga, Social Media has played the role of both, blessing as well as a curse. Social Media is a blessing to Yoga as it has helped to spread the awareness of Yoga, not just in India but all around the world.

Keywords: *social media, yoga, community, world*

Introduction:

Practitioners worldwide can connect and interact in the virtual yoga community, which primarily exists online. The impact of social media on the global yoga community has been profound, increasing accessibility and providing a platform for inspiration, education, and connecting practitioners regardless of their location.

Here are some aspects of the virtual yoga community:

1. **Online Yoga Classes:** The rise in popularity of online yoga classes has been primarily due to the advancement of technology and video conferencing platforms. Many yoga teachers and studios now provide live-streamed or pre-recorded sessions that can be accessed from the comfort of one's own home. This means that individuals have the flexibility to practice yoga with their preferred instructor, no matter where they are physically located.
2. **Yoga Challenges and Programs:** Virtual yoga challenges and programs, as well as workshops, can frequently be found organized on the internet, gathering together practitioners who have a shared desire or concept. These challenges typically involve a series of yoga poses, techniques, or mindfulness practices that participants follow over a specified period. Participants can connect and support each other through social media groups or dedicated platforms.
3. **Online Yoga Communities and Forums:** Various online platforms and forums cater specifically to the virtual yoga community. These platforms provide spaces for practitioners

to connect, ask questions, share experiences, and seek support. They often include discussion boards, chat rooms, and spaces to share progress or challenges.

4. **Social Media Groups and Hashtags:** Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter play a significant role in fostering the virtual yoga community. Practitioners can join dedicated yoga groups, follow hashtags related to yoga, and connect with like-minded individuals. These online communities offer a space for sharing experiences, seeking advice, and building connections.

Objectives of the study:

1. to explore how social media contributes to the formation and growth of the virtual yoga community
2. to study how social media platforms facilitate learning and education within the yoga community.
3. to study how individuals within the yoga community utilize social media platforms for sharing, connecting, and engaging with others
4. to study potential drawbacks of using social media to create a yoga community.

Review of Literature:

Dr. Hansaji Jayadeva Yogendra – Director, The Yoga Institute has written how social media helped Yoga flourish through across the globe. According to the author, when it comes to Yoga, Social Media has played the role of both, blessing as well as a curse. Social Media is a blessing to Yoga as it has helped to spread the awareness of Yoga, not just in India but all across the globe. There are millions of Yoga pictures out there on the internet, people practice it daily, and encourage or ‘influence’ their online friends to do the same thing.

Jillian Lacasse, Sara Santarossa, and Sarah J Woodruff (2019) have described #Yoga on Instagram: Understanding the Nature of Yoga in the Online Conversation and Community. According to the text, content, and image analyses, #yoga on Instagram seems to emphasize the physical nature of yoga as consistent with the commercialization of yoga and not traditional teachings of the practice.

Ways in which social media has influenced the yoga community:

1. **Accessibility and Reach:** Social media platforms have made yoga accessible to a broader audience worldwide. Social media platforms provide a global reach, enabling yoga practitioners from different parts of the world to connect and engage. People can now learn about different yoga styles, techniques, and philosophies from the comfort of their own homes. This digital transformation has expanded the reach of yoga and allowed individuals to connect with a global community of practitioners.
2. **Inspiration and Motivation:** Social media platforms like Instagram and YouTube have become platforms for yoga practitioners to share their practice and inspire others. Yogis can showcase their skills, flexibility, and strength, providing motivation for others to pursue their own practice. This has led to a surge in interest and participation in yoga. By following accounts of experienced yogis, influencers, and teachers, individuals can access a continuous stream of inspiring content, including advanced poses, creative sequences, and uplifting messages.

3. **Community Building:** Social media has facilitated the creation of virtual communities centered around yoga. People can connect with like-minded individuals, share experiences, and support each other's yoga journeys. Virtual yoga challenges, workshops, events, and collaborations are often organized and promoted through social media. These online communities provide a sense of belonging and can be particularly helpful for individuals who may not have access to a local yoga community.
4. **Learning and Education:** Social media has become a valuable tool for learning and education within the yoga community. Many yoga teachers and studios use platforms like YouTube and Instagram to share tutorials, tips, and educational content. This allows practitioners to deepen their knowledge, learn new poses and sequences, and improve their practice.
5. **Commercialization and Image Pressure:** One negative impact of social media on the yoga community is the increasing commercialization and image pressure. With the rise of influencers and sponsored content, some individuals may feel pressured to achieve a certain "yoga body" or strive for unattainable levels of flexibility. This can lead to unhealthy comparisons, body image issues, and a focus on aesthetics rather than the holistic benefits of yoga.
6. **Misrepresentation and Misinformation:** Social media platforms are also susceptible to the spread of misinformation and misrepresentation within the yoga community. With the vast amount of content available, it can be challenging to differentiate between credible sources and misleading information. This can lead to confusion among practitioners, potentially compromising their safety or understanding of yoga principles.
7. **Peer Support and Accountability:** Social media provides opportunities for peer support and accountability in the yoga community. Practitioners can join groups, follow hashtags, or participate in online forums where they can seek advice, share progress, discuss challenges, and receive encouragement from others. This peer support fosters a supportive and nurturing environment.

Yoga practitioners share various types of content on social media platforms to showcase their practice, inspire others, educate, and connect with the yoga community. Here are some common types of content shared by yoga practitioners on social media:

1. **Yoga Pose Demonstrations:** One of the most prevalent types of content shared by yoga practitioners is demonstrations of yoga poses. They post photos or videos of themselves performing various asanas (poses) with proper alignment and technique. These posts often provide instructions, variations, and tips for others to improve their practice.
2. **Yoga Sequences and Flows:** Many practitioners share videos or photos of their yoga sequences and flows. These posts showcase the fluidity and transitions between different poses, offering inspiration and guidance for creating a well-rounded practice.
3. **Tutorials and Educational Content:** Yoga practitioners frequently share tutorials and educational content to help others learn and deepen their practice. These posts may focus on specific poses, alignment principles, breathing techniques (pranayama), meditation practices, or yoga philosophy. They provide step-by-step instructions, explanations, and insights to educate and empower others.
4. **Inspirational and Motivational Messages:** Yoga practitioners often share inspirational quotes, messages, and personal reflections related to their yoga journey. These posts aim to inspire

and motivate others to continue their practice, embrace mindfulness, and cultivate a positive mindset.

5. **Yoga Challenges and Programs:** Yoga challenges are popular on social media platforms, where practitioners participate in a series of poses or themes over a specific period. Participants share their practice and progress, using designated hashtags to connect with others and create a sense of community.
6. **Personal Reflections and Stories:** Some yoga practitioners use social media platforms as a space for sharing their personal experiences, challenges, and growth through their yoga journey. These posts provide authenticity and vulnerability, allowing others to relate and connect on a deeper level.
7. **Wellness and Lifestyle Tips:** Yoga practitioners often share content related to overall wellness and a holistic lifestyle. This may include posts about healthy recipes, self-care practices, mindfulness exercises, and recommendations for natural products or wellness tools.
8. **Collaboration and Community Engagements:** Yoga practitioners collaborate with others to create content, such as joint practice sessions, duet poses, or group yoga photos. These collaborations foster connections within the yoga community and encourage mutual support and inspiration.
9. **Event Promotions and Retreats:** Yoga practitioners and teachers use social media to promote workshops, retreats, and events they are hosting or participating in. These posts provide information about dates, locations, and details, allowing others to join and connect in person.
10. **Behind-the-Scenes and Lifestyle Content:** Some yoga practitioners share glimpses of their daily life such as moments of self-care, yoga-related activities and insights into their personal journey. These posts add a personal touch, allowing others to connect with the practitioner on a more intimate level.

These types of content reflect the diverse ways in which yoga practitioners utilize social media platforms to engage, educate, inspire, and connect with others within the yoga community.

While social media offers many benefits for building a yoga community, it also presents certain drawbacks that should be considered. Here are some drawbacks of using social media to build a yoga community:

1. **Misinformation and Misrepresentation:** Social media platforms can be sources of misinformation and misrepresentation within the yoga community. It can be challenging to differentiate between accurate and credible information, leading to confusion or the spread of false beliefs about yoga practices, techniques, or philosophies.
2. **Superficiality and Image Pressure:** Social media tends to prioritize aesthetics and visual appeal. This can create a focus on the external aspects of yoga, such as perfect poses, flexibility, or body appearance. It may lead to unrealistic expectations, body image issues, and a shift away from the holistic and inward-focused aspects of yoga.
3. **Comparison and Competition:** Social media can foster a sense of competition and comparison within the yoga community. Seeing others' advanced poses or flexible bodies may create pressure to perform at a certain level, which can hinder the individual's own journey and self-

acceptance. It can also lead to unhealthy comparisons and a lack of appreciation for one's own progress and uniqueness.

4. **Limited Personal Connection:** While social media allows for virtual connections, it lacks the depth and personal connection that can be established through in-person interactions. The absence of physical presence and direct communication can limit the ability to form genuine connections, receive hands-on guidance, or experience the energy of practicing together.
5. **Digital Overload and Distraction:** Constant exposure to social media can contribute to digital overload and distraction. The continuous stream of content and notifications can disrupt focus, mindfulness, and the ability to fully immerse oneself in the yoga practice. It may also lead to excessive screen time, impacting overall well-being.
6. **Dependence on External Validation:** Social media platforms often promote the culture of seeking external validation through likes, comments, and follower counts. This can create a reliance on external validation within the yoga community, shifting the focus away from the internal and personal benefits of the practice.
7. **Privacy and Security Concerns:** Engaging on social media platforms involves sharing personal information and content publicly. This raises privacy and security concerns, as personal data can be exposed to potential misuse or unauthorized access. It is essential to be mindful of privacy settings and to exercise caution while sharing personal information or engaging in online discussions.

Conclusion:

Social media has had a profound impact on the yoga community, influencing its formation, growth, and connectivity. These platforms have played a crucial role in increasing accessibility to yoga related activities and allowing like-minded individuals to connect. Additionally social media has provided a space for sharing yoga poses, sequences, tutorials, and educational content, which has fueled learning and growth within the community. Through the use of social media, practitioners from all corners of the world can engage in yoga related activities and access a vast array of knowledge and resources.

However, it is crucial to recognize the potential drawbacks associated with social media's impact on the yoga community. Misinformation, superficiality, image pressure, and the culture of comparison can arise within social media platforms. There can be a risk of misinformation and misrepresentation of yoga practices, as well as a focus on external appearances rather than the holistic benefits of yoga. Additionally, social media usage can lead to digital overload, distraction, and dependence on external validation.

To maximize the positive impact of social media on the yoga community, individuals should approach it mindfully and critically evaluate the information and content shared. Balancing online engagement with in-person interactions, fostering genuine connections, prioritizing the internal benefits of yoga, and maintaining privacy and security are important considerations.

By leveraging the benefits of social media while being mindful of its drawbacks, the yoga community can continue to harness its power as a tool for connection, inspiration, education, and support. Striking a balance between online and offline engagement will contribute to a more authentic, inclusive, and meaningful yoga community experience.

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