



The uncontested rise of social media in Asia

It is human to feel the need to connect with other people. Traditionally people have formed tribes and societies, and gathered in towns and cities. Connection used to be mainly via face-to-face meetings. Now, digital technology makes it easier to connect, and those connections can be anywhere in the world via the Internet. In the past half decade, two of the biggest developments in terms of digital connections are social media and social networking.

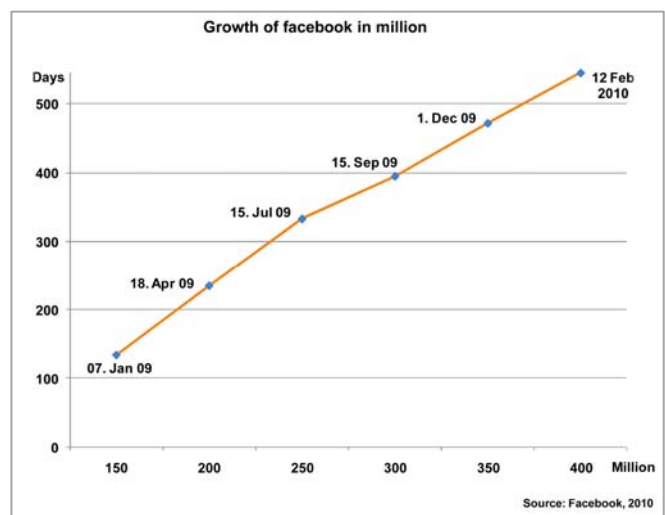
Social media describes the media that people create when they connect with each other, and share content online. Millions of people around the world have made videos and taken still images with their digital cameras and mobile phones, and put them on the web. The best-known examples of social media are YouTube and Flickr. Jawed Karim, Chad Hurley and Steve Chen launched **YouTube** in February 2005. YouTube's first video was called "Me at the Zoo" and shows Jawed Karim at San Diego Zoo. That video was uploaded on 23 April 2005.

In October 2006 Google bought YouTube for US\$1.65 billion. Hurley currently serves as chief executive officer and Chen as chief technology officer. In February 2008 the author interviewed the Google vice president, Douglas Merrill, in San Francisco. Merrill said people were uploading eight hours of video to YouTube every minute of every day, 24 hours a day. A little over two years later, on 17 March 2010, the official YouTube blog announced that 24 hours of video were being put on YouTube every minute. Yes, a day of content appears every minute on YouTube.

Another major player in social media is **Flickr**. A Vancouver-based company, Ludicorp, launched Flickr in February 2004. The co-founders were husband and wife Stewart Butterfield and Caterina Fake. Like YouTube, Flickr allows people to store and share still images and video. Yahoo acquired Ludicorp and Flickr in March 2005. By November 2007 members had placed about two billion photographs on Flickr. Two years later the number had surged to more than four billion.

Social networking works on the same sharing principle as social media, as people use digital tools to connect and network with each other. The best-known examples in 2010 were Facebook, MySpace, Orkut, LinkedIn and Twitter. The terms social media and social networking are often lumped together, described by the term "Web 2.0".

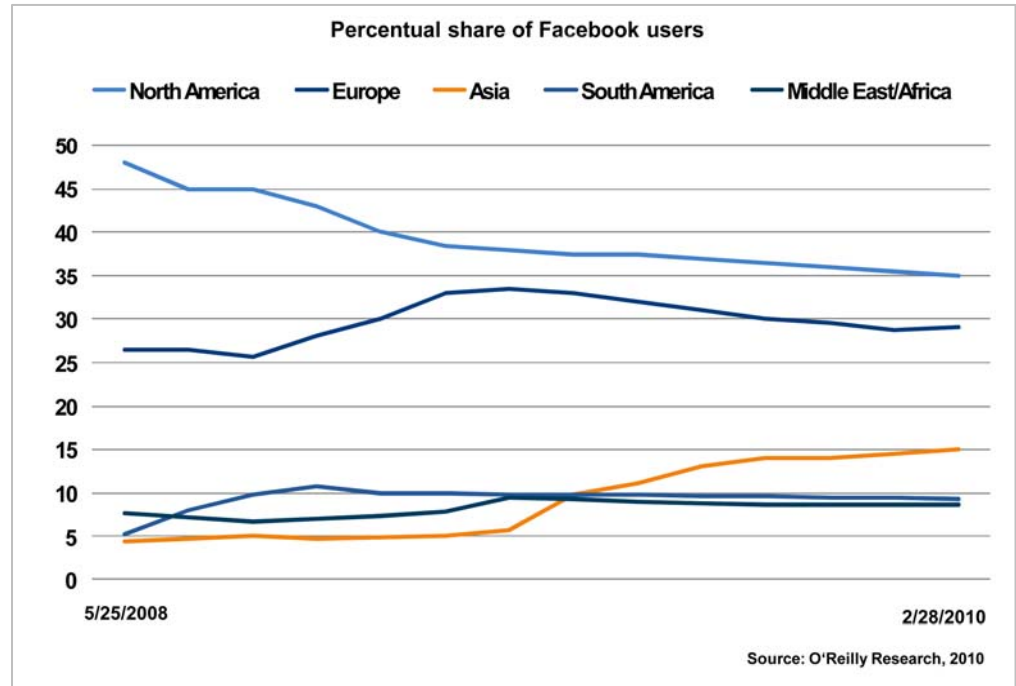
Mark Zuckerberg founded **Facebook** with university roommates and computer science students at Harvard University. Zuckerberg's prep school, Phillips Exeter Academy, had for decades published a printed manual of all students and faculty, unofficially called the "face book". Zuckerberg began writing code for the Facebook website in January



Asia's Media Innovators

by Stephen Quinn

April 2010 – Chapter One



2004. Membership was initially restricted to students of Harvard College. Within the first month, more than half the undergraduate population at Harvard was registered on the service. In June 2004 Facebook's headquarters moved to Palo Alto in California's Silicon Valley and it took almost four years to attract the first 100 million members (in 26 August 2008). But growth has surged since, especially in Asia.

Given the size of its audience, what is Facebook worth? In October 2007 Microsoft announced that it had bought a 1.6 per cent share of Facebook for US\$240 million which gave Facebook an implied value of about US\$15 billion. But Microsoft bought preferred stock that carried special rights. In November 2007 Hong Kong billionaire Li Ka-shing invested US\$60 million. In August 2008, *BusinessWeek* reported private sales by employees and purchases by venture capital firms. Based on these recent developments, the company's total valuation is somewhere between US\$3.75 billion and US\$5 billion. In the last months the growth of Facebook took place especially in Asia. The following gives an overview of the recent development in the worldwide share of Facebook users.

Another major player is **MySpace**. The first version of MySpace launched in August 2003. Initially designed as a data storage facility, it evolved into a social networking

site after the "dot-bomb" crunch. In July 2005 Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, the parent company of Fox Broadcasting and other global media enterprises, bought MySpace and its parent company for US\$580 million. The MySpace component was said to be worth US\$327 million. MySpace became the most popular social networking site in the United States in June 2006. It reached 100 million accounts on 9 August 2006. But Facebook overtook MySpace in 2008, according to measurement company comScore, based on monthly unique visitors.

MySpace's revenue model is based around advertising. Through its web site and affiliated advertising networks, MySpace collects data about users. This enhances its ability to use behavioural targeting to select advertising relevant for each visitor. In August 2006 MySpace signed a US\$900 million agreement with Google to provide a Google search facility and advertising on MySpace. Projected advertising revenues in 2010 were US\$385 million. Most of that (US\$360 million) would come from the United States. Facebook and MySpace are America's two social networking leaders.

Google owns the **Orkut** social networking site. It is named after its creator, Google employee Orkut Büyükkökten. Though less popular in the United States than Facebook and MySpace, Orkut is one of the most

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Asia's Media Innovators

by Stephen Quinn

April 2010 – Chapter One

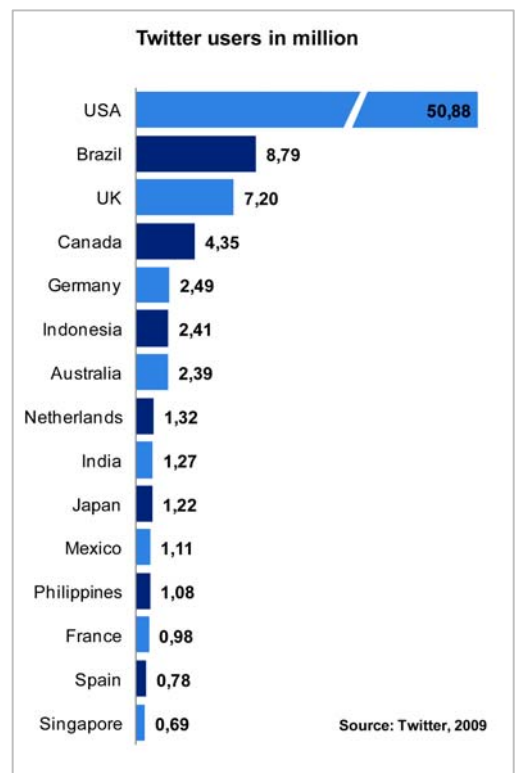
visited websites in Brazil and India. As of December 2009, just over half (51 per cent) of Orkut's users were from Brazil, followed by India with 20 per cent. The United States had 17 per cent. In August 2008 Google announced Orkut would be managed and operated in Brazil because of the large user base there. As of February 2010 Orkut had more than 100 million active users worldwide.

LinkedIn is a business-oriented social networking service. It allows registered users to maintain a list of people they know and trust in business. LinkedIn launched in May 2003. As of March 2010 LinkedIn had more than 60 million registered users in more than 200 countries. About half of the users are in the United States, and another 11 million are in Europe. India was the fastest-growing country in 2009, with 3 million users. Australia has just over a million registered users. LinkedIn needed 477 days to get its first million members. But it took only 12 days to move from 49 to 50 million, in October 2009. The average age of a LinkedIn member is 41. Members are relatively prosperous, with an average salary of US\$110,000. In June 2008 a group of venture capital companies took a 5 per cent stake for US\$53 million, making LinkedIn worth about US\$1 billion. LinkedIn started making money in March 2006.

Twitter probably received the most publicity of the social networking companies in 2009. Jack Dorsey, Biz Stone and Evan Williams co-founded a company called Obvious that spun off to become Twitter. It is a free micro-blogging service that enables users to send and read messages known as *tweets*. Tweets are posts of up to 140 characters that appear on a user's profile page. It is called micro-blogging because of the limited number of characters. People "follow" other Twitter users, and tweets are automatically delivered to those subscribers. Jack Dorsey published the first tweet on 21 March 2006. Despite all the media hype around Twitter in 2009, it still has a tiny market share compared with the other social networking sites described in this chapter. As of March 2010 Facebook had about 59 per cent of the global audience and MySpace 30 per cent. Twitter had a mere 1.84 per cent. In January 2010 RJMetrics published a study of Twitter users that showed a high number of inactive accounts. Twitter had 75 million registered users as of December 2009, with

the number of registrations growing at 6.2 million a month. The average number of followers was 27. But only 17 per cent of registered Twitter users used the service in December 2009, and another quarter of Twitter users had no followers (another indication of nil activity). Two in five users had not sent any tweets that month, and four in five had sent fewer than 10 tweets.

Robert Moore, president of RJMetrics, noted: "In a lot of cases where there's a really low threshold of work to get an account, companies will see a tremendous number of registrations, particularly when there's a lot of publicity driving not particularly tech-savvy people [to try it]," he said. Moore noted that 17 per cent of 75 million people still meant a large number of active members. Moore also noted that regardless of whether a user was active, they had still provided their contact information to Twitter. "Having all these people's contact and registration information might provide them the outlet to go and woo them back in at some point," Moore said. In a 7 December 2009 article in *The Wall Street Journal*, advisory firm and market-maker NYPPEX valued Facebook at US\$7.6 billion, LinkedIn at US\$1.25 billion and Twitter at US\$1.13 billion. NYPPEX also estimated Facebook would make US\$710 million in 2010, while LinkedIn would earn US\$205 and Twitter a mere US\$1.3 million.



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by Stephen Quinn

April 2010 – Chapter One

Do these companies make money?

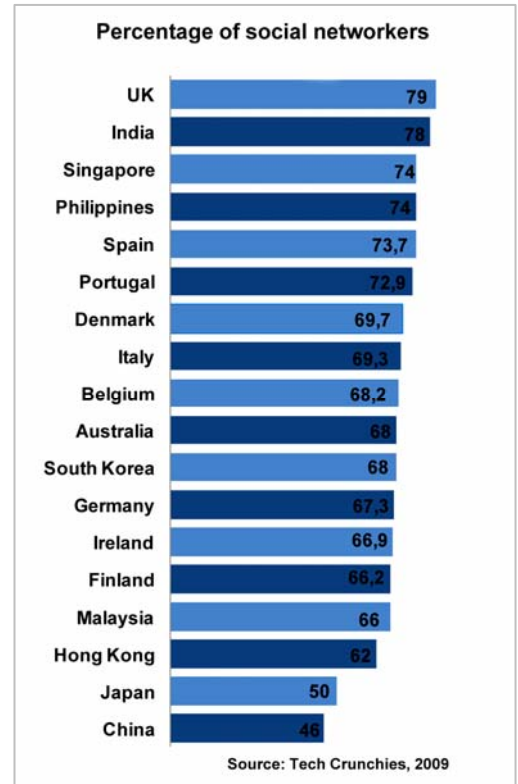
Facebook remains a private company, so financial information is not officially released. Revenues for 2007 were about US\$150 million. By July 2009 Facebook had earned US\$310 million, with 74 per cent coming from local advertisers. By way of comparison, MySpace had earnings of US\$550 million (26 per cent from local advertisers), Flickr US\$336 million and Twitter about US\$288 million. YouTube continued to lose money, though how much was difficult to calculate.

Advertising follows audience

Even though many web 2.0 companies do not make money, people spend huge amounts of time with them. Eventually advertising follows audiences, so it is likely that social networks will start to attract increased advertising. Spending on advertising on social networks in the United States in August 2008 was US\$49 million. The amount surged to US\$108 million a year later, despite the global financial crisis. In the year to September 2009 audiences had tripled the amount of time they spent on the social networks compared with the previous year.

In October 2009 the GigaOm blog reported that Facebook's 300 million users collectively spent more than 8 billion minutes on the site each day. Those minutes work out at almost 15,300 years. On a busy day, 1.2 million photographs are delivered or watched on Facebook every second. Revenues from digital advertising and marketing in the United States are expected to go past print revenues in 2010, according to a new study from Outsell, a consulting and research group. This prediction is based on Outsell's annual survey of more than 1,000 American advertisers and marketers in December 2009. Advertisers and marketers plan to spend a total of US\$368 billion in 2010, Outsell found. Of that amount, 32.5 per cent (US\$119.6 billion) will go to digital, versus 30.3 per cent (US\$111.5 billion) for print. Comparing revenues is one way to track the rise and fall of individual media. Advertising on the Internet moved past outdoor in 2000, when digital revenues totaled US\$8 billion, compared with US\$5.24 billion for outdoor. Internet advertising revenues passed radio for the first time in 2008, with US\$23.4 billion for the Internet versus US\$19.5 billion for radio.

Anyone who uses social networking and social media must go online via a fast Internet connection. Thus the number of web 2.0 users tends to be higher in Europe and the United States compared with Asia because of the more developed networks in those countries. The majority of social networkers are in Europe. Although the concept emerged in the United States, only 59 per cent of America's online population reported having a social media profile in 2009.



The next part looks at the use of social media and social networks in a range of Asian countries.

In 2009 the global marketing company OgilvyOne published a report about online activities in the Asia Pacific region. The report said 456 million people in the Asian region participated in social media that year. This represented 31 per cent, or just under a third, of the world's entire online population. The report also said three in four (74 per cent) of the world's 17 trillion SMS messages originated from the Asia-Pacific region that year. The report said online advertising was expected to experience compound growth of 25 per cent between 2009 and 2011.

In 2009 the research company Synovate in Hong Kong published its *Young Asians 2008*

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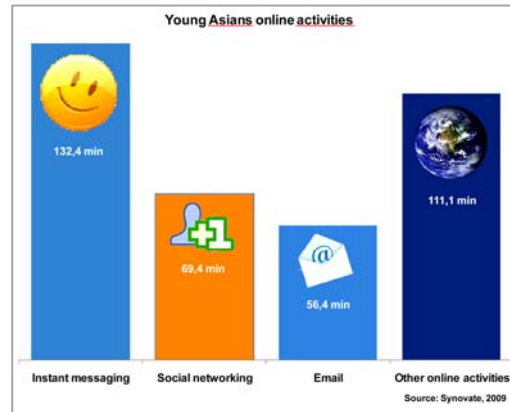
Media Programme Asia
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Asia's Media Innovators

by Stephen Quinn

April 2010 – Chapter One

Target Report. The report studied people from Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, South Korea, China, India, Japan and Vietnam. On an average day people in those countries aged 8-24 spent 6 hours and 10.8 minutes online, that report said.



The rest of this chapter looks at the individual nations in the Asian region.

India

Social networking started to flourish in India from late 2004. Orkut has been the market leader since then. Its simple interface was preferred as a networking tool over the American-focused MySpace. By December 2009 Indians represented 20 per cent of all Orkut users globally, behind Brazil and the United States. According to reporting agency Alexa, Orkut is the third most popular site in India behind Yahoo and Google. JuxtConsult, an online research company based in New Delhi, estimated 44 per cent of Indians' time online was spent with social

networking. Yahoo reaches three in four (74 per cent) of Indians currently online, JuxtConsult said. In 2009 Facebook received a large amount of media attention that gave the site a huge boost in India. It will be interesting to observe whether Facebook overtakes Orkut.

A December 2009 survey showed that social networking was becoming a problem for Indian employers. The survey revealed that some employees were spending so much time on social networking sites that it was starting to affect productivity, India's *Economic Times* reported on 22 December 2009. The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Assocham) conducted the survey. It found that office staff on average spent an hour a day on sites like Facebook. The chamber noted: "Close to 12.5 per cent of productivity of human resource in corporate sector is misappropriated each day since a vast majority while away their time accessing social networking sites during office hours." Workers also use Orkut, MySpace and LinkedIn for "romancing," the newspaper said.

The BBC News quoted Assocham secretary general DS Rawat as saying the growing use of social networking was "dangerous for overall productivity" and IT companies had installed software to "restrict its use". The survey questioned 4,000 employees between the ages of 21 and 60 from Delhi, Bangalore, Chennai, Ahmedabad, Surat, Mumbai (Bombay), Pune, Chandigarh, Lucknow and Kanpur. The survey found almost half of

International site rankings for Facebook, Google and Twitter

Country	Internet users (in mio)	Facebook's position	Twitter's pos	Google's pos	Site at #1
China	360	Not in top 500	371	3	baidu.com
United States	228	2	12	1	google.com
Japan	96	30	20	2	yahoo.co.jp
India	81	4	11	1	google.co.in
Brazil	68	16	18	1	google.com.br
Germany	54	3	11	1	google.de
Russia	45	20	40	4	yandex.ru
South Korea	37	5	19	4	naver.com
Iran	32	58	Not in top 500	1	google.com
Indonesia	30	1	12	2	facebook.com
Philippines	24	1	10	3	facebook.com
Vietnam	22	8	192	1	google.com.vn
Worldwide	1.734	2	12	1	google.com

Source: Royal Pingdom, 2010

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Media Programme Asia

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Asia's Media Innovators

by Stephen Quinn

April 2010 – Chapter One

office employees accessed Facebook during work time. And two in every five workers built their Orkut or Facebook profile at the office. A large proportion of employees (83 per cent) could see no harm surfing at work during office hours.

China

Social networking is popular in China. As of February 2010 about 384 million people were online in China, or about 26 per cent of the population, higher than the global average of 20 per cent. Chinese people have historically sought to build connections (*guanxi*). Digital technologies have produced an explosion in social networking, led by video-sharing and instant messaging sites Youku and QQ. Youku's turnover in 2009 rose five-fold to 200 million yuan (US\$29 million) on the previous year. Online revenues in China surged by more than 30 per cent to 74.3 billion yuan (US\$10.9 billion) in 2009, research firm iResearch said.

It predicted that online earnings in China from advertising, games, shopping and other activities would surge to 112.3 billion yuan in 2010. A report published by Tencent, the owner of social networking site Qzone and instant messenger product QQ, said Qzone had more than 200 million users in 2009, higher than other social networking websites in China like Facebook (175 million) and MySpace. About 150 million Qzone users updated their account at least once a month, the report said. QQ Xiaoyou, a service targeting students in universities and high schools, had more than 20 million registered users and it had only officially launched in January 2009, the report said. Tencent's instant messenger product QQ had more than 50 million users.

Each day about 4 million people upload 60 million photos to Qzone. About 9.5 million new blog entries are posted every day. Tencent CTO Xiong Minghua said Tencent planned to combine applications such as chatting tools, online entertainment and gaming, as well as leisure activities, like QQ Music. Qzone had recently opened platforms for e-commerce applications, such as *pai-pai.com* and *tenpay.com* (these are similar to PayPal). A factor that inhibits Facebook's growth in China is the fact its name sounds like the Chinese phrase *fei si bu ke* (非死不可), which translates to "doomed to die" or "bound to die". Transliterations like

these represent one of the challenges of doing business in China.

In 2010 the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences published its *Blue Paper 2009* entitled "Analysis and prediction of the situation of Chinese society in 2010". The document said the Internet had become an independent source of news and public opinion, and the Internet, together with cell phones, was the country's most powerful carrier of public opinion. One of the most popular Chinese tweets in late 2009 read: "If Twitter can be blocked, then pigs can climb trees." (Twitter 封得住, 母猪会上树). On 11 February 2010 the news agency AFP reported from Beijing that China's domestic social media sites like Weibo were booming because of their knowledge of the world's largest Internet market, plus the censorship stifling foreign rivals like Facebook, Twitter, and the Google-owned YouTube.

The government, wary of the power of such networks to mobilise large groups of people, has blocked foreign sites such as Twitter. This has guided Chinese users towards domestic equivalents. "The Chinese government has been deliberately fostering domestic enterprises which are generally much easier to be controlled," said Xiao Qiang, who created *China Digital Times*, a site that monitors web developments in China, based at the University of California at Berkeley. "This is one of the essential components of the Chinese censorship mechanism, which also creates a trade barrier for the world's largest Internet market," Xiao wrote. *China Digital Times* (<http://chinadigitaltimes.net/>) is blocked in China but can be accessed via proxy sites. Micro-blogging tools like Twitter received much publicity in 2009. Various Chinese equivalents such as Weibo flourished, especially when Twitter and Facebook were cut off nationwide in June 2009 for the twentieth anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre, and in July 2009 after ethnic unrest in the far-western region of Xinjiang. Authorities blamed the spread of the violence in Xinjiang partly on "agitators" who used the web to provoke unrest. In January 2010 Google threatened to abandon its Chinese-language search engine and possibly end all operations in the country because of censorship and cyber attacks it said targeted the email accounts of Chinese rights activists. In the past, only a few

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Asia's Media Innovators

by Stephen Quinn

April 2010 – Chapter One

highly motivated and powerful people could engage with mass media.

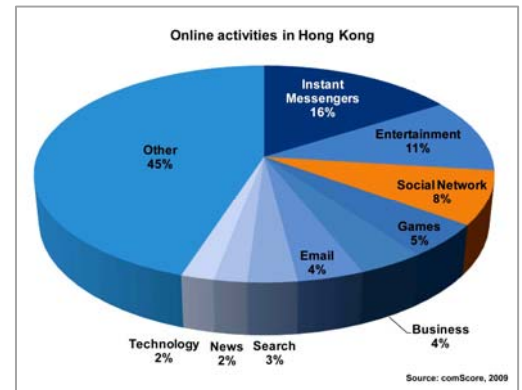
Micro-blogging sites like Twitter lower the threshold for action. The process of micro-blogging can be likened to water droplets gathering into a cloud. Once individuals agree on a view and continue to share constantly, people with the same idea gather and form a force. That force can change national policy and even social order. In the future we will see "micro-revolution" through "micro-information". This is why micro-power is so important. China had about 180 million active blogs as of early 2010. Foreign social networking sites like Twitter face deeper problems than censorship, because their sites are not tailored to Chinese users, AFP said.

Even if Facebook and YouTube were not blocked in China, they still could not compete with the popularity of Kaixin (China's Facebook equivalent) and Youku, Duan Hongbin, an IT analyst at Anbound Consulting, told AFP. "It's like Baidu [a search engine] and Google in China – generally Google is better in terms of technology and branding. But most Chinese still prefer Baidu," he said. "It's not because of nationalism – the language barrier is one reason. It is normal for Chinese users to use a Chinese-language interface. There are not many web users in China who prefer an English interface."

Hong Kong

Almost three in four of Hong Kong's online population visited a social networking site in December 2009. Per capita, Singapore and Hong Kong have more registered Facebook users (32 per cent and 28 per cent respectively) than in the United States (26 per cent). A comScore report published in October 2009 said Yahoo was the most visited web property in Hong Kong in August 2009. "An average Hong Kong Internet user spends more than 25 hours online per month, making it one of the most engaged Internet markets globally," said Will Hodgman, comScore's executive vice president for the Asia-Pacific region. While Hong Kong represented a small Internet market in Asia, its highly engaged and affluent audience made it especially valuable to advertisers and publishers, Hodgman said. Hong Kong Internet users spent most of their time with chat, entertainment and social networking

in 2009. Social networking sites captured 8 per cent of total time, led by Facebook.



In August 2009, of the almost 4 million people in Hong Kong aged 15 or older who accessed the Internet from their home or work computers, Yahoo sites were the most popular (3.1 million visitors). Microsoft sites ranked second with 2.6 million visitors, followed by Google sites with 2.5 million visitors. Facebook had 2.1 million visitors.

Singapore

Singapore's Internet users spend more than 50 per cent of their online time on social networking and entertainment websites. In February 2009, more than 2.5 million people in Singapore aged 15 and older accessed the Internet from home or work locations, spending an average of 21 hours per person a month on the Internet. Online communication, entertainment, and social networking topped the list of how users were most likely to spend their time.

"Singapore is one of the most advanced digital markets in the Asia-Pacific region and represents a growing opportunity for digital marketers," said Will Hodgman, comScore's executive vice president for the Asia-Pacific region. "The combination of high broadband penetration, heavy online engagement and the overall tech savvy of Internet users in Singapore make it an ideal market for the adoption of valuable existing and emerging digital technologies, including search, social media and online video."

Google was the most visited Internet property in Singapore with 2 million visitors in February 2009, reaching almost 80 per cent of the online population. Microsoft sites came second with 1.9 million visitors (a 77 per cent reach), while Yahoo sites ranked third with 1.8 million visitors (a 70 per cent reach). Social networking sites also ranked

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Media Programme Asia

www.kas.de/mediaasia

Asia's Media Innovators

by Stephen Quinn

April 2010 – Chapter One

well. Facebook had more than 1 million visitors and ranked as the fourth most visited property in February 2009, while Friendster ranked sixth with 838,000 visitors.

Singapore's strategic response to new media opportunities is encapsulated in the Intelligent Nation2015 or iN2015 Infocomm masterplan. It is a 10-year plan to transform Singapore into a connected nation and global city, powered by the twin information technologies of an ultra high-speed National Broadband Network and a pervasive wireless broadband network. The aim is to provide many wi-fi hotspots throughout Singapore in public places such as shopping malls, and national deployment of WiMax networks for pervasive indoor and outdoor coverage in key areas such as the Central Business District.

Citizens tend not to trust traditional media associated with the government. A high proportion of Singaporeans are interested in political blogs, relative to other nations in the area. Some have turned to the blogosphere to voice their disapproval of Government policies. A large proportion of young minds participate in this active social networking community. The Government can choose to engage with them, or lose them. In April 2009 reporter Serene Luo wrote in *The Straits Times* that social networking sites were regulated "with a light touch". She quoted the acting minister for information, communications and the arts, Lui Tuck Yew, as saying it was unlikely that total deregulation would take place "any time soon". The government maintains a list of 100 banned websites, though it has never disclosed what websites are on that list. But *The Straits Times* reported they were mainly pornographic sites, plus a few that projected extremist views on religion.

South Korea

The leading social network sites in South Korea, Cyworld and Nate, had a combined audience of 30 million in a population of 49 million, as of late 2009. Three in five of the country's online audience are active social networkers. This number is significant because South Korea has one of the highest levels of Internet connections in the world. Both Nate and Cyworld are owned by SK Communications, a subsidiary of one of South Korea's main telecommunications company, SK Telecom. The "Cy" in Cyworld

could mean "cyber", but is also a word play on the Korean term for relationship. Members cultivate relationships by forming *ilchon* ("friendships") with each other through a mini home page. These home pages include a photo gallery, video, guest-books, a friends' list, and a personal bulletin board. Users also maintain "mini-rooms". These are small, apartment-like spaces that members decorate and maintain. It's a bit like playing the Sims game. Members conduct commerce through the purchase and sale of "*dotori*" (acorns). One *dotori* costs 100 won (about 9 US cents). People buy items with which to decorate their "mini-rooms".

SK is also working with developers to integrate social gaming into the Cyworld platform. Cyworld launched in September 1999. In recent years it has spread into China (7 million members as of early 2010) and Vietnam (450,000), though in 2010 it shut down its operations in Germany, the United States and Japan. Nate, a web portal, acquired Cyworld in 2003, and the two companies collaborate widely. Nate users can use "*dotori*" (acorns) on the site. Many well-known Koreans use their Cyworld and Nate accounts to publicise their activities. For example, bands detail their upcoming tours. Nate maintains an instant messenger service called NateOn.

Naver is overwhelmingly the most popular search engine in the country, with a market share of more than 70 per cent, compared with Google's 2 per cent. A group of former Samsung employees launched Naver in June 1999. It expanded into Japan in 2009. It is owned by a company called NHN, or Next Human Network. Naver also operates a service for children, called Junior Naver.

The Philippines

Social networking is one of the most popular web-based activities in the country. Filipinos are very active users of a range of social network sites such as Facebook and Multiply. The popularity of social networking in the Philippines can be traced to a key aspect of Filipino culture that can be encapsulated as "friends help friends". For Filipinos, friends and who they know is often more valuable than money, because of what can be achieved through favouritism, nepotism and social links.

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Media Programme Asia

www.kas.de/mediaasia

Asia's Media Innovators

by Stephen Quinn

April 2010 – Chapter One

A 2008 report by Universal McCann entitled *Power To The People: Wave3* declared the Philippines the “social networking capital of the world,” noting that 83 per cent of Filipinos surveyed were members of a social network. That attitude has spilled over into Filipino cyber-culture. Politicians use social networking for election campaigns and the police use it as a tool in criminal investigations. Filipinos are also the top up-loaders of photographs and viewers of web videos. Filipinos are also the world leader in SMS or text messaging via a mobile phone. Social networking has evolved onto the mobile phone ahead of the desktop computer because many more people have mobile phones than Internet connections. Many companies have been developing services based on mobile phones, starting with providing free phone calls between members as well as low-cost text messaging services.

In June 2007 *The Wall Street Journal* reported on the apparent demise of Friendster.com, which helped launch the online social networking movement in the United States in 2002. Within two years services such as MySpace had replaced Friendster in that country. But Friendster never went away, the newspaper said. Its user base simply shifted to Asia. “Today, more than 70 per cent of Friendster’s traffic comes from Southeast Asia.” It is the most popular web site in the Philippines, according to site tracker Alexa. Sixty per cent of Filipino users of Multiply are female, and 70 per cent are under the age of 25. Filipino users of Friendster are between the ages 16 to 30, and 55 per cent of them are female.

Thailand

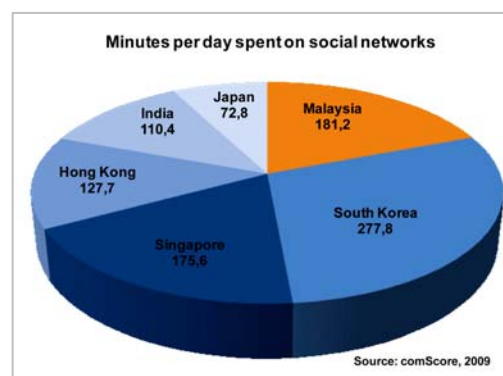
As of late 2008 Thailand had 16.1 million Internet users in an adult population of 43.7 million, according to the National Electronic and Computer Technology Centre. Adults are defined as being aged 18 or older. Broadband was available in major cities and towns, but was rare in smaller villages and the countryside.

The majority of Internet users in Thailand still rely on dial-up access. Despite the relatively low level of broadband penetration, more young Thai Internet users access websites than read newspapers in a typical week. Such is the interest in online that the social networking site Hi5 has about two

million members in Thailand aged between 15 and 40. Almost two in three of them are aged between 18 and 29. Hi5 developed as a popular social network in the two years to the end of 2009. The total worldwide membership of Hi5 is about 80 million

Malaysia

Malaysia has about 16 million Internet users in a population of 28 million. An IDC research report said the number of Malaysian Internet users would reach 20.4 million by 2012. The number of Facebook users in Malaysia passed the one million mark in March 2009 and has been growing significantly since. Social networking is popular among Malaysia’s youth. A 2009 survey by YouthSays – the country’s largest youth community website with more than 160,000 members – showed that 95 per cent of the 900 respondents had Friendster accounts, 90 per cent were on Facebook and 38 per cent used Twitter. Results of this survey were presented at the sixth Malaysian Media Congress in July 2009. In terms of time spent on social networks, Malaysia (181.2 minutes) ranked second in the Asian region.



The social networking penetration rate was 66.6 per cent of the population in December 2008, behind only Singapore (74.3 per cent) and South Korea (68 per cent). Facebook is the top social network in Malaysia, followed by YouTube and Friendster. Twitter is the eighth most popular social network site.

Malaysians seem to prefer global social networks like Facebook, MySpace and Friendster rather than local social networks, partly because of the high levels of English in the country. Where homegrown social networks dominate – for example Mixi in Japan, Cyworld in Korea and QQ in China – it is because of the dominance of the local language. Another factor analysts believe is driving the global social media trend among

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by Stephen Quinn

April 2010 – Chapter One

young people is Malaysia's tough censorship laws. The BBC's web site reports that the government exerts substantial control over the media and imposes restrictions in the name of national security. The government was keen to insulate the largely Muslim population from what it considered harmful foreign influences. News was subject to censorship, and entertainment shows and music videos regularly fell afoul of the censors. Scenes featuring swearing and kissing were routinely removed from television programmes and films, the BBC said.

Indonesia

Indonesia population of about 246 million contains about 300 ethnic groups, all with different cultures developed over centuries. Internet penetration was low, as of September 2009, at about 13 per cent of the population. But social networking is accelerating among the youth age bracket. The 13-to-25-age group was growing much faster than all other ages, according to Ben Lorica, a San Francisco-based senior analyst in the research group at O'Reilly Media. By contrast in the United States, the fastest growth rates are now seen in people 35 and over. Perhaps 2 per cent of Indonesia's vast population – the fourth largest in the world – is using Facebook, says Lorica, suggesting plenty of room for growth. Friendster still attracted more people than Facebook in the Philippines, according to Alexa.com, as of late 2009. But Facebook was growing strongly said Lorica, who is originally from the Philippines. For many tech-savvy Indonesians, Facebook is the preferred mode of digital communication.