How the Pandemic has Changed the Way We Utilize the Internet and Social Media to Stay Connected

Staying Connected While Social Distancing

By Nancy Glascock
When the world came to a halt at the end of March 2020, there was little do as all schools and nonessential businesses were shut down. New York quickly became the epicenter of the pandemic, so New Yorkers and Americans alike quickly turned to spending their lives online instead of outside.

We had to find entertainment wherever possible, through means such as social media and media streaming sites like Netflix, Tik Tok, and much more.
This graph from the New York Times shows an increase in the usage of streaming services as American’s look for entertainment, and ways to stay connected with one another while socially distancing. This data indicates that websites such as Facebook, Netflix, and YouTube have all seen user numbers on their mobile apps stagnate, as their websites have grown since most people are now home.

My friends and I utilized Netflix Party through a Google Chrome extension. We used this streaming service multiple times throughout quarantine. This was another fun way to interact with everyone safely, allowing us to watch tv shows and movies in sync while being able to chat at the same time.
Increase in the Use of Video Chat

With six-foot social distancing measures and quarantine measures being put in place across the country, we looked for different ways to stay connected.

As shown in the data provided by SimilarWeb and Apptopia, there has been a boost in the usage of video chat. This shows a stark increase in the use of apps such as Google Duo and Houseparty, as they allow friends and family to see each other instead of text messaging, giving more of a sense of normalcy to reduce the feeling of isolation during quarantine.

To stay connected with my friends and family during quarantine I mostly utilized Houseparty, Apple’s FaceTime, and Zoom to keep in contact with and check up on everyone during this scary time. It was strange seeing the people I am closest to in my life through a screen but it was comforting to see everyone okay.
Apptopia shows us how we have been forced to adapt to social distancing, as schools and workspaces were closed for social distancing purposes in concern for public safety and civilians health throughout the ever evolving COVID-19 crisis.

With public spaces remaining closed or providing minimal open hours, schools and employers have turned to the internet to hold meetings, teach classes, and for students, attend classes and lectures.

In the middle of spring semester 20’ at SUNY New Paltz we were sent home and went fully online; we met through Zoom and both received and submitted assignments through Blackboard. By fall semester 20’ most classes remained online, however, students were allowed to live on campus, following strict health and safety guidelines to reduce the chance of spread.
Throughout the last seven months of the pandemic I have seen an increase in my phone usage. With not much to do besides school and nowhere to go, I found myself picking up my phone multiple times an hour to check my social media. The social media I utilized the most was TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter. Social media has been useful for staying connected during quarantine with both friends and global news. These apps acted as a safe space, as everyone was going through hardships and experiencing this new reality together. Social media has also been helpful in spreading information about the virus and providing new updates on the severity of the situation.

SimilarWeb and Apptopia show the increase of TikTok usage throughout the pandemic, with a percent change from the average on January 21st to the average on March 24th.

TikTok is a mobile app that has been booming since the beginning of the pandemic. Before COVID-19 heavily impacted New York I was never very active on the platform, but I now find myself checking TikTok every morning before I check my texts or emails. It is so popular, in my opinion, because of how relatable the content is due to the algorithm that caters posts to what you are interested in, your humor, and who you are as a person.
Let's meet at the Met for the end of our world to cry
For our grief is metastatic, our losses terminal
We'll walk through rooms where pyramids and mummies lie
And keep our distance slightly personal
Visit Monet's water lilies and van Gogh's fields
Until we ourselves, lost within, are hidden stars
Exploring the great splendors that each painting yields
Layer upon layer in cosmic avatars
Wandering the echoed halls without a worry
Though the air is sedated, we try to find home
Among ivory statues, it's not a hurry
For nostalgia, sweet nostalgia, a benign syndrome
gets us to stroll down Fifth Ave with thoughts of our youth
remembering the New York slice and old phone booths

Ansel Oommen + Jessica Kashiwabara
STAY SAFE