

Social Media Envy

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Recently I published a book with my colleagues on analyzing and securing social media. This book is a highly technical book discussing algorithms and designs for analyzing social media data as well as securing social media systems and ensuring the privacy of the members. I wanted to include additional chapters on the psychological aspects of social media but did not do it in the end as we are computer scientists and not psychologists and we have not carried out psychological studies on the usage of social media. Nevertheless, I decided to write this article based entirely on my personal views and what I have read about social media envy in articles published by New York Times and other prominent venues,

I examined the social media sites of several of my friends, colleagues and acquaintances (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter) and almost all of them talk about the great things happening to them. They post photos of their vacations in exotic locations, happy pictures with their families and dressed to the brim with fashionable clothes and makeup that sometimes make them look like clowns. It's like an addiction to post the photos on Instagram about their very happy and prosperous lives almost every day; even though I believe that some of them have lost their jobs and pretend to work. One would think that they do not have a care in the world. Unfortunately, such posts from those having such low self-esteem have driven some gullible people to depression. It is important for everyone to know that life is not a bed of roses. I will illustrate this point with an example of my own life.

Firth, I post only technical stuff or on matters that are close to my heart such as saving the children in war torn regions of the world and information about conferences such as Women in Cyber Security that I am actively involved with. I do not post personal stuff on my social media pages. But if I were to write about personal stuff then I can write fantastic stuff about me or stuff that is really awful. So here is an example.

My happy and pretentious post would read "Life is so great. I have a fantastic career. I have a dream family. I have received several prestigious awards. I travel to London three times a year often paid international business class upgraded to first class. I stay at the London Hilton on Park Lane and enjoy my afternoon tea consisting of scones with clotted cream and sometimes include strawberry jam follow by English tea, milk and sugar. Several junior computer science female professors have said I am the most elegant female computer science professor." And I can go on and on... I can then post photos of me taken in exotic cities receiving my research awards and dressed elegantly wearing my signature red lipstick. On the other hand, here is what I am faced with every day. "I am getting old and developing wrinkles on my neck. Should I get a neck lift? I am overweight and struggling to lose weight. I had a fall two years ago and have not gotten around to doing my physical therapy. I have to start soon or else my bad leg would get worse." Then I post a very unflattering photo of myself with no makeup and dressed in travel clothes.

Now anyone reading my first post will either be terribly envious of me or laugh at me to show that they are not bothered and say I am so shallow. But anyone reading my second post will feel sorry for me and try and help me out. I have lived long enough to know that the grass is never greener on the other side. So, don't get fooled by what others post on social media. Don't try to do one upmanship on them. You will only lose out with such shallow people with low self-esteem. Be happy in your own skin. If you follow this advice, you will glow with self-confidence without the need for any skin illuminators.