

adaptation, a way for users to reclaim control over their social sphere and escape the performative pressures of mainstream social networks

Within these closed groups, friendship is sustained through constant, informal, and multi-faceted communication – sharing memes, coordinating daily life, and offering support in real-time. This creates a digital environment that more closely mirrors the trust and exclusivity of strong offline friendships.

In conclusion, this analysis demonstrates that digital friendship is a dynamic concept, continuously evolving in response to technological affordances. The transition from the «friends» model on Facebook to closed chats on Telegram marks a significant maturation of online sociality. It indicates a user-driven move towards spaces that prioritise depth, privacy, and genuine interaction over mere breadth of connection. The future of digital friendship, therefore, appears to lie not in accumulating contacts, but in nurturing connections within carefully bounded, private digital spheres. This leads to three key findings:

1. The concept of a «friend» online is shifting from a quantitative metric to a qualitative one, defined by privacy and the intensity of interaction.

2. Users are strategically migrating to private platforms to reclaim control from algorithms and escape the performative pressures of public networks.

3. These private digital spaces foster a form of communication that more authentically replicates the trust and multifaceted nature of strong offline friendships.

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THE DIGITAL MIRROR: HOW TECHNOLOGY IS REWRITING OUR HUMAN IDENTITY

Цифровое зеркало: как технологии меняют нашу человеческую идентичность

We live in a special time, a period of great change where technology is reshaping our entire society. The digital world is no longer just a tool we use; it has become a part of our everyday existence. The study aims to provide a comprehensive overview of how technology is acting as a digital mirror, fundamentally altering human behavior.

The internet has become a universal library that is open to everyone. Knowledge and opportunities that were once available only to a privileged few are now within reach for many more people [1]. Besides, technology has completely changed our ideas about community and the workplace. Distance doesn't matter as much anymore. This global connection allows us to learn about different cultures and broadens our horizons.

The digital revolution has also created new economic opportunities. Small businesses can sell their products to customers all over the world through online stores. New forms of work, like the gig economy, have emerged. In the world of finance, technologies like blockchain and digital currencies are creating new systems that operate outside of traditional banks. In government, digital tools can make services faster and more transparent. However, a major problem is the effect on our mental health and social lives, which can lead to anxiety and a feeling of not being good enough.

Another serious issue is the problem of personal data and privacy. Many free online services make money by collecting our personal information. They track what we like, what we search for, and where we go. This information is then used to show us targeted advertisements or, even worse, to try to influence our opinions and behaviors. We are often not fully aware of how much data is being collected about us, and we have little control over how it is used. The algorithms that control what we see online are designed to keep us engaged. They often show us content that we already agree with, which can trap us in a «bubble» where we only hear one side of the story. Fake news and misinformation can spread quickly in these conditions, making it difficult to know what is true.

Finally, not everyone benefits equally from the digital revolution. There is a growing «digital divide» between those who have access to fast internet, modern devices, and the skills to use them, and those who do not. This divide is not just about having a smartphone; it's about having the knowledge to use technology effectively and safely. People who lack these skills risk being left behind, unable to access new jobs, quality education, or even essential services, which can make existing social inequalities even worse [2].

Developing «digital citizenship» means we need to be informed and critical participants in the digital world. Education is the key. We need to teach people, from a young age, not just how to use software, but how to think critically about the information they find online. They need to learn how to protect their personal data, recognize fake news, and understand how social media platforms work. At the same time, we need regulations to protect people's privacy and hold technology companies accountable. The study concludes that our future in this digital era depends on the choices we make today. The challenge is to build a society that is not only smart and efficient but also fair, humane, and focused on the well-being of all its members.

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