

# **TheFacebook**

**Inside the world of Facebooks controversial growth, failed policies, electoral nightmares, and data breaches.**

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### **Declaration of Originality**

This thesis is submitted by the undersigned to the Institute of Art Design & Technology, Dún Laoghaire in partial fulfillment of the examination for the BA (Hons) Television Production. It is entirely the author's own work except where noted and has not been submitted for an award from this or any other educational institution.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'BS' with a stylized flourish extending from the 'S'.

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Ben McEvoy-Sullivan

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I'd like to thank friends and family who've helped, supported, and worked with me throughout over year long journey. It has been a hardworking process and to do it with other students that I am forever grateful to call friends, it has truly helped me to drive me to finish this thesis and to finish it to the utmost best of my ability.

## **Abstract**

What you are about to read is a dissertation on the global rise of Facebook and Mark Zuckerberg. It will cover 20 years of Facebook's birth, the growth, and the feats it has gained along the way, but will also unfold the ugly truth of Mark Zuckerberg and his ideology of creating a social network, being responsible for allowing users personal data to be exploited, how he and his team allowed the likes of terrorist organizations and right-wing groups, to spread false information, hate speech, and promote terror and violence amongst.

In preparation for writing this thesis, the use of books, like "The Facebook Effect" by David Kirkpatrick, "The Venture Alchemist" by Rob Lalka, and "The Accidental Billionaires" by Ben Mezrich play a part in this write up, as well as the 2010 drama film "The Social Network" and the 2024 documentary "Zuckerberg, King of the Metaverse"

The thesis will cover the general knowledge of Facebook from the early 2000's to the early stages of the 2020's. As we read into the chapter's, they will include the use of facts and fiction between making a film based on "real life" when itself, is not fully accurate, ask ourselves the question, why filmmakers exaggerate real life events in films?

And will finally end off on the state that Facebook is in now, if it can ever be trusted again by its loyal userbase, can they prevent future disasters from happening again, and will be fortunate to get the opinion from the author of "The Facebook Effect", David Kirkpatrick, who has his own opinion on Mark Zuckerberg and what he thinks about Facebook now.

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## Introduction

Social media has now transformed the way consumers interact with brands. As of January 2025, an analytic report from *Datareportal* shows that there were 5.24 billion social media users around the world at the start of the new year, equating to 63.9 percent of the total global population who were social media users.<sup>1</sup> Mark Zuckerberg is the man users associate with the existence of social media. He has forever changed the way we view social media, what we can do, share, and react to when users are on it. He has revolutionized the way we think about social media and technology. In the last two decades, Facebook has grown into the most-used social media platform around the world, roughly over 3 million people globally count themselves as monthly users.<sup>2</sup> India is home to the largest Facebook audience with 378 million users as of April 2024, as per Statista reports.<sup>3</sup>

Additionally, the United States, Indonesia, and Brazil each have well over 100 million Facebook users.<sup>4</sup> He has brought a community of people from different nationalities, communities, race, gender, tribes, religious faiths, etc., to a platform that he made in his own dorm room in Harvard University, and has made, what might just be, one of greatest inventions in human history, and of modern technology. But the harsh side of the coin is that you do not get to three billion users without creating some enemies or controversy along the way.

During Zuckerberg's 20-year tenure under Facebook, the company has done some shady things behind the computer screen. From selling out

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<sup>1</sup> DataReportal. "Global Social Media Stats." *DataReportal – Global Digital Insights*, Kepios, Oct. 2024, [datareportal.com/social-media-users](https://datareportal.com/social-media-users).

<sup>2</sup> Dixon, Stacy Jo. "Number of Monthly Active Facebook Users Worldwide as of 3rd Quarter 2023." *Statista*, 21 May 2024, [www.statista.com/statistics/264810/number-of-monthly-active-facebook-users-worldwide/](https://www.statista.com/statistics/264810/number-of-monthly-active-facebook-users-worldwide/).

<sup>3</sup> Dixon, Stacy. "Facebook Users by Country | Statistic." *Statista*, Statista, 8 Mar. 2024, [www.statista.com/statistics/268136/top-15-countries-based-on-number-of-facebook-users/](https://www.statista.com/statistics/268136/top-15-countries-based-on-number-of-facebook-users/).

<sup>4</sup> Statista. "Facebook - Statistics & Facts." *Statista*, 2023, [www.statista.com/topics/751/facebook/#topicOverview](https://www.statista.com/topics/751/facebook/#topicOverview).



friends/business partners that would lead to years of lawsuits and legal battles, to purposely letting a third-party organization gain access to millions of Facebook accounts, private data, and promoting political ideologies to help businessman-turned politician, Donald Trump to win the 2016 United states presidential election. And so, people ask, is Facebook still a safe and reliable platform for users to socialize? Or is it a platform filled with false apologies and promises, leading it to be a platform you must think twice before using it.

This thesis will establish an analytic narrative of Facebook and Mark Zuckerberg, his thought process to what would be a breakthrough for modern technology and give birth to social media as we know it today, but will also uncover some flaws and shady activity that has led Facebook to being investigated by the US government on countless occasions to this day as of 2024. Considering Facebook has been the face of innumerable scrutiny, there are loads of controversial topics that the company has been under. For this thesis, it will go through the most notable topics that have sparked untrust and hatred between Facebook and its users.

As Facebook has an ever-growing audience that never seems to slow down, there are countless books, movies, and documentaries, discussing pros, and flaws of Facebook. This will also be covered in this thesis to make the argumentative point's that not everything a viewer watches is 100% true and will be getting the thoughts of an author who has made two books about Mark Zuckerberg and Facebook, and who knows of him on a personal level, to see if his stance on Zuckerberg has changed in any way since meeting him when he was a young man.

## **Chapter I: A young man with a vision**

### **Introduction**

In this Chapter, it will dive into the world of a young Mark Zuckerberg. From humble beginnings, to being a tech genius in Harvard University, to creating the globally recognized social media platform, “Facebook,” and uncovering the innovative and yet self-centered side of Mark Zuckerberg, and the friendships and lawsuits he tarnished along the way.

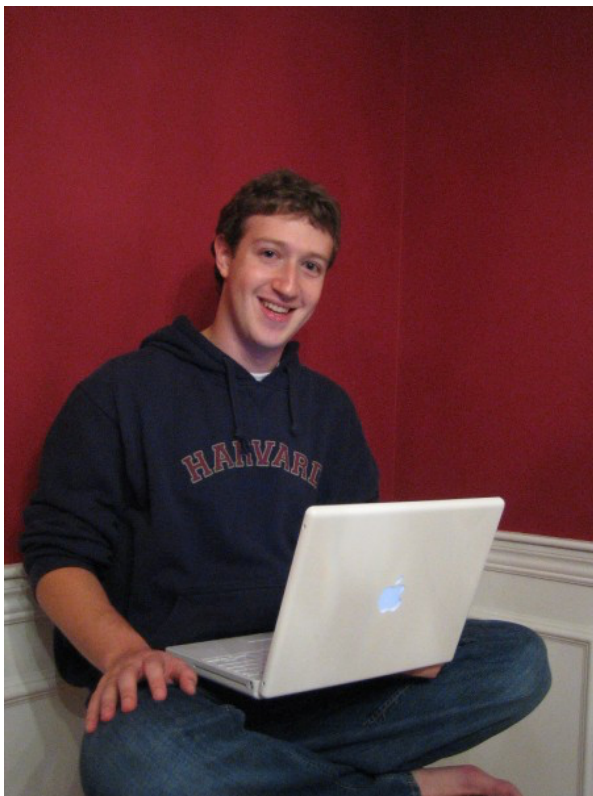


Figure 1 – Mark Zuckerberg in 2005

Mark Elliot Zuckerberg was born on the 14th of May 1984, in White Plains, New York<sup>5</sup> to parents Edward Zuckerberg, a dentist, and Karen Zuckerberg, a psychiatrist. He grew up in a family that encouraged intellectual curiosity and academic achievement. Zuckerberg’s interest in computers started at an early age. His father taught him basic programming when he was just a child. While still in high school, Zuckerberg began taking classes at Mercury College. After two

years, his parents sent him to Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire in 2000.<sup>6</sup> Through motivation and support from his family, he honed his skills in

<sup>5</sup> Purdy, Elizabeth Rholetter. “Mark Zuckerberg.” *Salem Press Biographical Encyclopedia*, July 2024. EBSCOhost, research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=6b2f2995-bfb9-3af3-ab51-8dbfca76b253.

<sup>6</sup> Purdy, Elizabeth Rholetter. “Mark Zuckerberg.” *Salem Press Biographical Encyclopedia*, July 2024. EBSCOhost, research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=6b2f2995-bfb9-3af3-ab51-8dbfca76b253.

engineering and programming, later becoming proficient in a variety of languages like French, Latin, and ancient Greek.<sup>7</sup>

After attending Phillips Exeter academy, in 2002, Zuckerberg was enrolled at Harvard University, with intentions to study psychology but quickly redirected his focus toward computer science. His exposure to a diverse student body and an environment bustling with intellectual energy fueled his ambition to innovate.<sup>8</sup>

He would move into the Kirkland house, one of the eight dormitories in Harvard, with his roommates, Chris Hughes, a literature and History major, and Dustin Moskovitz, an economics major.<sup>9</sup> In his second year, he would create a popular program that he called “CourseMatch”, which allowed students to form class selection decisions, form study groups and create new friends.<sup>10</sup>

He would go on to create another program, what is known as the infamous site, “FaceMash.” Facemash was created by Mark Zuckerberg, in which the user can rate female student’s, based on their attractiveness through a side-by-side photo comparison. As the target audience would be male students, they can get to choose which of the two female student’s is more attractive than the other. Zuckerberg did this by hacking into the university house websites to gather photos of every female student in Harvard and then wrote the codes to compute rankings after every vote, adding it to his website.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Kirkpatrick, David. *The Facebook Effect : The inside Story of the Company That Is Connecting the World*. Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2011.

<sup>8</sup> “Britannica Money.” *Www.britannica.com*, 18 Apr. 2024, [www.britannica.com/money/Mark-Zuckerberg](http://www.britannica.com/money/Mark-Zuckerberg).

<sup>9</sup> Kirkpatrick, David. *The Facebook Effect : The inside Story of the Company That Is Connecting the World*. Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2011.

<sup>10</sup> Kirkpatrick, David. *The Facebook Effect : The inside Story of the Company That Is Connecting the World*. Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2011.

<sup>11</sup> “Hot or Not? Website Briefly Judges Looks | News | the Harvard Crimson.” *Www.thecrimson.com*, [www.thecrimson.com/article/2003/11/4/hot-or-not-website-briefly-judges/?page=1](http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2003/11/4/hot-or-not-website-briefly-judges/?page=1). Accessed 4 Nov. 2020.

After creating the website, Zuckerberg forwarded the link to a few friends for advice and would later be sent to all Harvard houses. In one day, the number of visitors on the site had been visited by 450 people, who voted around 22,000 times.<sup>12</sup> On November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2003, Zuckerberg was notified by Harvard Authorities that his case would appear before the Ad Board, the day after he decided to take the site down, due to sharp criticism of the site's use of ID photos and ranking students according to attractiveness.<sup>13</sup>

This would ensue public outrage from Harvard authorities and all female students as this was not only a sexist remark, and a degrading image towards women, but it was also breaking Harvard law and running the risk of facing expulsion from the University.<sup>14</sup>

On November 19th, 2003, Zuckerberg was accused of breaching security and violating individual privacy.<sup>15</sup> These charges were based on a complaint from the computer services department over his unauthorized use of students' on-line facebook photographs. After all the delegations, Zuckerberg would not face expulsion from Harvard.

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<sup>12</sup> Kaplan, Katharine A. "Facemash Creator Survives Ad Board | News | the Harvard Crimson." *Www.thecrimson.com*, 19 Nov. 2003, [www.thecrimson.com/article/2003/11/19/facemash-creator-survives-ad-board-the/](http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2003/11/19/facemash-creator-survives-ad-board-the/).

<sup>13</sup> Kaplan, Katharine A. "Facemash Creator Survives Ad Board | News | the Harvard Crimson." *Www.thecrimson.com*, 19 Nov. 2003, [www.thecrimson.com/article/2003/11/19/facemash-creator-survives-ad-board-the/](http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2003/11/19/facemash-creator-survives-ad-board-the/).

<sup>14</sup> Baxter, Kirk, and Angus Wall, editors. *The Social Network*. Directed by David Fincher, Sony Pictures Entertainment Motion Picture Group, 2010.

<sup>15</sup> Kaplan, Katharine A. "Facemash Creator Survives Ad Board | News | the Harvard Crimson." *Www.thecrimson.com*, 19 Nov. 2003, [www.thecrimson.com/article/2003/11/19/facemash-creator-survives-ad-board-the/](http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2003/11/19/facemash-creator-survives-ad-board-the/).

In an interview with the Harvard Crimson, Zuckerberg mentioned in the ad-board meeting, that he would not be forced to withdraw or leave the university, “I wanted some more time to think about whether or not this was really appropriate to release to the Harvard community... Issues about violating people’s privacy don’t seem to be surmountable, I’m not willing to risk insulting anyone.”<sup>16</sup> This would be the first time Zuckerberg would obtain people’s private information without knowledge or permission, subtly foreshadowing the extent of what he was capable of and what he could do.

Students at Harvard, mainly female, wanted Zuckerberg to be expelled from the campus and were appalled by the Harvard board rooms decision, but did he really pose a threat to the college and students around him? In Rob Lalka’s novel “The Venture Alchemist,” Zuckerberg obtained the private data login information from the student reporter that interviewed him hours ago.<sup>17</sup> He used those same passwords to gain access to their school email accounts so he could read what they were going to write about him before the paper went to press. He didn’t need to conduct a cyberattack at the time, he already had their data.<sup>18</sup>

This foreshadows the start of a controversial relationship between Mark Zuckerberg, and the public’s personal information and right to privacy. Zuckerberg knew he had to regain people’s respect and any character he had left, even if it seemed it was maybe all but tarnished. Some Harvard students praised Zuckerberg and thought it was fun and clever, but most students, mainly female’s, would be disgusted and upset, for putting women on display for men to look and mock at, making them feel like objects and not human beings.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Kaplan, Katharine A. “Facemash Creator Survives Ad Board | News | the Harvard Crimson.” *Www.thecrimson.com*, 19 Nov. 2003, [www.thecrimson.com/article/2003/11/19/facemash-creator-survives-ad-board-the/](http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2003/11/19/facemash-creator-survives-ad-board-the/).

<sup>17</sup> Lalka, Rob. *The Venture Alchemists*. Columbia University Press, 2024.

<sup>18</sup> Lalka, Rob. *The Venture Alchemists*. Columbia University Press, 2024.

<sup>19</sup> Lalka, Rob. *The Venture Alchemists*. Columbia University Press, 2024.

A couple of days after meeting with the Harvard board, A trio of undergraduate entrepreneurs would get wind on what “Facemash” was. Their names were Divya Narendra, and twins, Cameron, and Tyler Winklevoss. Narendra emailed Zuckerberg on November 3<sup>rd</sup> for a meeting, to which he agreed. The four of them sat down and consulted to Zuckerberg about the opportunity of making an online website called “TheHarvardConnection,” (Later changed to ConnectU) where users could create a bio, page, interests, friends etc.,

The only difference to similar websites like Friendster and myspace, was it would be exclusive to students with a harvard.edu email address. The sole purpose was exclusivity, and after having previous programmers, they knew Zuckerberg would be the one to fulfill the reality. <sup>20</sup> Zuckerberg agreed to be a part of the project.

At first, it seemed that Zuckerberg was enthusiastic, but that would soon change. Over the next few weeks, to the disappointment of the Winklevoss twins and Narendra, Zuckerberg never met their deadlines, instead, offering a wide mix of excuses. Based on the novel, “Facebook: the inside story,” On November 13<sup>th</sup>, an email from Zuckerberg was sent to the twin’s stating “I forgot to bring my charger with me for thanksgiving, so I haven’t had access to my laptop since the battery ran out on Wednesday”. He promised that when he returned, he’d work on it as soon as possible. <sup>21</sup>

However, Zuckerberg would never make up for that promise, and on January 14<sup>th</sup>, he would send his final email stating his intentions of leaving the

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<sup>20</sup> FOUNDAS, SCOTT. “Revenge of the Nerd.” *Film Comment*, vol. 46, no. 5, 2010, pp. 38–42, [www.jstor.org/stable/43459792](http://www.jstor.org/stable/43459792). Accessed 5 May 2020.

<sup>21</sup> Levy, Steven. *Facebook : The inside Story*. Penguin Business, 2020.

Winklevoss' and Narendra, saying he wasn't so sure if this was going to work out and he could not guarantee the website can be done. To disbelief from the trio to secrecy from Zuckerberg as he was building something of his own, something like the trio's idea.

During the winter break, Zuckerberg spent weeks in his dorm room, coding for hours, he was very eager to get this project done, he wanted to build a universal website, where he could bring students together and create a fun platform for them to interact with. He would pitch the idea to his friends, they liked the idea and worked with him.



Figure 2– Eduardo Saverin in 2012

Soon after, Zuckerberg's friend, Eduardo Saverin, would learn about this new project of Zuckerberg's and was optimistic about it. Eduardo Luiz Saverin was born on March 13<sup>th</sup>, 1982, to a wealthy Jewish family in São Paulo, Brazil.<sup>22</sup>

It was at Harvard, where he enrolled in 2000, that the two would cross paths, and met through mutual friends. They quickly bonded over their interests in entrepreneurship, and computer programming.

While Zuckerberg was introverted and awkward, Saverin presented an outgoing, charismatic personality. Saverin would later join Zuckerberg as an early partner, bringing valuable skills in finance and business administration.

After weeks of endless and sleepless nights coding and creating the domain, on January 11th, 2004, Zuckerberg finally finished working on his new project. He went online and paid Register.com thirty-five dollars to register to the website, "TheFacebook.com" for one year.<sup>23</sup>

The website gained inspiration from Facemash and Coursematch. (Another website Zuckerberg made in the past)<sup>24</sup> TheFacebook would be exclusively for Harvard students only. The websites' purpose was to bring students together, socialize and interact with one another online, it was easy to sign up, if a student has a harvard.edu email, they can create a bio, add whatever they'd

<sup>22</sup> Boslaugh, Sarah. "Eduardo Saverin." *Salem Press Biographical Encyclopedia*, Mar. 2024. EBSCOhost, research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=3f574ff1-8a0c-3883-af76-8e30a2c70e3f.

<sup>23</sup> Kirkpatrick, David. *The Facebook Effect : The inside Story of the Company That Is Connecting the World*. Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2011.

<sup>24</sup> Glose . *Inspiration from Mark Zuckerberg*. Glose, p. 3, glose.com/book/inspiration-from-mark-zuckerberg. Accessed 3 Feb. 2025.



like, from expressing their hobbies, interests, and love life. It would be a fun way for students to socialize and add other Harvard students as friends.



Figure 3 Fig 3 – Mark Zuckerberg as a sophomore on February 4th, 2004

On February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2004, “TheFacebook” would officially go live for the first time. The home screen would read: “TheFacebook is an online directory, that connects people through social media networks at colleges, you can use Thefacebook to search for

people at your school, find out who are in your classes, and create new friends.” The founders of TheFacebook were Mark Zuckerberg, Eduardo Saverin, Andrew McCollum, Dustin Moskovitz, and Chris Hughes.<sup>25</sup>

Out of the 4 of Zuckerberg’s friends, Saverin would be his go-to person into the birth of Facebook, as he would also provide the initial seed funding of around \$15,000, allowing the team to buy servers to grow the website, marking the foundation that would eventually allow Facebook to grow exponentially.<sup>26</sup> Zuckerberg continued to work on “TheFacebook” from his dorm room, alongside McCollum, Moskovitz, and Hughes, it was Saverin that would give Zuckerberg the emails of many Harvard students, from all different houses, to share what the website. Saverin was pivotal in Facebook’s relevancy in 2004.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Kirkpatrick, David. *The Facebook Effect : The inside Story of the Company That Is Connecting the World*. Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2011.

<sup>26</sup> Kirkpatrick, David. *The Facebook Effect : The inside Story of the Company That Is Connecting the World*. Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2011.

<sup>27</sup> Baxter, Kirk, and Angus Wall, editors. *The Social Network*. Directed by David Fincher, Sony Pictures Entertainment Motion Picture Group, 2010.

5 days into the launch of “Thefacebook” and it had already registered 650 Harvard students and was expected to hit 900 students that very same afternoon.<sup>28</sup> In an interview with the Harvard crimson, Zuckerberg said. “I think it is kind of silly that it would take the University a couple of years to get around to it. I can do it better than they can, and I can do it in a week.”<sup>29</sup>

After a few weeks, students were hooked, they loved how they could create their Facebook page all by themselves and see what other students were doing. Considering Thefacebook is a Harvard only domain, Zuckerberg already had the idea that the website could be bigger than what it was. He knew he could not let the exclusivity live on forever if he wanted to make a name for it globally. Another problem being, is revenue, giving that Thefacebook was free to use, and no paid advertisements.

Although Zuckerberg was not too worried about the financial side of things at that moment, Saverin on the other hand, was. Thefacebook was producing almost no revenue, yet the increasing popularity of the service was booming, it had almost 100,000 users at 34 schools, which only made sense in Saverin’s eyes to start turning profit on the website. The two would have countless disputes for days about using ads on the website, something Saverin was for, and Zuckerberg, against the time.<sup>30</sup> After much convincing from Saverin, Zuckerberg would allow advertisements and investors to make offers. Thefacebook would go live in multiple college campuses from all over the United States.

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<sup>28</sup> Tabak, Alan. “Hundreds Register for New Facebook Website | News | the Harvard Crimson.” *Thecrimson.com*, 9 Feb. 2004, [www.thecrimson.com/article/2004/2/9/hundreds-register-for-new-facebook-website/](http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2004/2/9/hundreds-register-for-new-facebook-website/).

<sup>29</sup> Tabak, Alan. “Hundreds Register for New Facebook Website | News | the Harvard Crimson.” *Thecrimson.com*, 9 Feb. 2004, [www.thecrimson.com/article/2004/2/9/hundreds-register-for-new-facebook-website/](http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2004/2/9/hundreds-register-for-new-facebook-website/).

<sup>30</sup> Lee, Young-Joo. “Liked on Facebook, Liked for Real?: Nonprofits’ Online Popularity and Financial Performance.” *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, vol. 31, no. 3, Mar. 2021, pp. 609–21. EBSCOhost, <https://doi.org/10.1002/nml.21447>.

Saverin would organize a meeting with Peter Thiel, the co-founder, and CEO of PayPal at the time, to negotiate an investment in Facebook. He would be Facebook's first investor, with Thiel to own over 10% of stake in the company, with 1 million shares of the company, paying 500 thousand dollars to "thefacebook".<sup>31</sup> From there, it was the moment that Facebook would become a powerhouse in the tech industry.

After the successful investment, in June 2004, Zuckerberg would drop out of Harvard and his team moved to Palo Alto, California.<sup>32</sup> Zuckerberg and Saverin would eventually go on to meet Sean Parker, the founder of the infamous music-sharing site "Napster."<sup>33</sup>

After discussing diverse ways that the website can go and talking about the possibility of it being a future billion-dollar company. Zuckerberg was impressed with the way Parker presents himself and the keen interest he had with thefacebook. Both parties shook hands, and Parker would be apart of the team, becoming president of the company.

Now being renamed to "Facebook," the website would go on to receive 160,000 members from the small rebrand, Zuckerberg realized the amount of money he was generating but always continued to stay humble. In an interview with the Harvard Crimson, he'd go on to say he was not in it for the money, "I just like making it and knowing that it works and having it be wildly successful is cool, I guess, but I mean, I dunno, that's not the goal."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Thiel, Peter A., and Blake Masters. *Zero to One : Notes on Startups, or How to Build the Future*. Crown Business, 2014.

<sup>32</sup> Purdy, Elizabeth Rholetter. "Mark Zuckerberg." *Salem Press Biographical Encyclopedia*, July 2024. EBSCOhost, research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=6b2f2995-bfb9-3af3-ab51-8dbfca76b253.

<sup>33</sup> Boslaugh, Sarah. "Sean Parker." *Salem Press Biographical Encyclopedia*, Mar. 2024. EBSCOhost, research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=63334eed-df2f-3045-98d5-c09fdc95a66b.

<sup>34</sup> "Mark E. Zuckerberg '06: The Whiz behind Thefacebook.com | News | the Harvard Crimson." [www.thecrimson.com/article/2004/6/10/mark-e-zuckerberg-06-the-whiz/](http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2004/6/10/mark-e-zuckerberg-06-the-whiz/). Accessed 29 July 2022.

Facebook was getting multi-million-dollar investments from multiple companies, thanks to Parkers influence. Soon after, yahoo would offer Zuckerberg one billion dollars for the full ownership of Facebook, to which he said no.<sup>35</sup> His Family and friends thought he was crazy, but Zuckerberg seemed unfazed, only focused on making Facebook more mainstream.

Although Zuckerberg was thriving both globally and financially, it was his friendship with Eduardo Saverin that was still a bit shaky. In the summer of 2004, Saverin took a summer internship at an investment bank in New York City, he intended to solicit more advertising for Facebook, while Zuckerberg and his team stayed in California. Saverin was still the CFO, but he was not always there to represent Facebook at the time, which at times would lead to arguments between Saverin and Zuckerberg, as Zuckerberg believed he was wasting his time. The two would agree to invest an extra \$20,000 in Facebook. The money was needed to buy servers and other equipment and to support the programming team.<sup>36 37</sup>

It was not long until Zuckerberg would eventually have blood on his hands, when he would get filed a lawsuit by former classmates Divya Narendra, Cameron, and Tyler Winklevoss, for claiming that Zuckerberg had stolen the idea for the program after being asked to work with them on “the Harvard Connection.” He insisted that he did not steal their idea, stating that he contributed to “less than a day’s work,” then quitting when the project “yielded few appreciable results.”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Kirkpatrick, David. *The Facebook Effect : The inside Story of the Company That Is Connecting the World*. Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2011.

<sup>36</sup> Baxter, Kirk, and Angus Wall, editors. *The Social Network*. Directed by David Fincher, Sony Pictures Entertainment Motion Picture Group, 2010.

<sup>37</sup> Boslaugh, Sarah. “Eduardo Saverin.” *Salem Press Biographical Encyclopedia*, Mar. 2024. EBSCOhost, research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=3f574ff1-8a0c-3883-af76-8e30a2c70e3f.

<sup>38</sup> “Lawsuit Threatens to Close Facebook | News | the Harvard Crimson.” *www.thecrimson.com*, www.thecrimson.com/article/2004/9/13/lawsuit-threatens-to-close-facebook-mark/. Accessed 24 Dec. 2023.

Things would only get worse for Zuckerberg as tensions and disputes with Saverin only continued to worsen. In April 2005, as Facebook would start to issue 24 million new shares of stock, Zuckerberg and the board of directors voted to dilute Saverin's shares secretly, effectively reducing his ownership from around 30% to less than 10%, whilst keeping everyone nearly the same.<sup>39</sup>

As expected, Saverin was irate with Zuckerberg. It would not be long until Saverin responded with a lawsuit against Facebook, claiming he had been wrongfully ousted and demanding compensation.<sup>40</sup> Whilst Facebook eventually hit the one million user mark on its platform, there was no time for Zuckerberg to celebrate as he was now going to have to battle two lawsuits.

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<sup>39</sup> Wroldsen, John S. "'The Social Network' and the Crowdfund Act: Zuckerberg, Saverin, and Venture Capitalists' Dilution of the Crowd." *Vanderbilt Journal of Entertainment and Technology Law*, vol. 15, no. 3, Mar. 2013, p. 606. EBSCOhost, research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=884bd45b-51db-3243-972c-d67d5ff5989b.

<sup>40</sup> "The Facebook Founders' Feud: Mark Zuckerberg vs. Eduardo Saverin." *Entrepreneurs Herald*, Sept. 2024, www.entrepreneursherald.com/blog/the-facebook-founders-feud-mark-zuckerberg-vs-eduardo-saverin. Accessed 28 Nov. 2024.

## **Conclusion**

Mark Zuckerberg's decision to pivot from collaboration with the Winklevoss twins and Divya Narendra to focus exclusively on secretly developing his own social networking site, is a significant moment in the narrative of early social media. It would all eventually settle out nearly four years later, in September of 2008, Cameron and Tyler Winklevoss received 65 million dollars and signed a non-disclosure agreement.<sup>41</sup>

Eduardo Saverin received an unknown settlement. His name was restored to the Facebook masthead as a Co-founder, he now currently resides in Singapore. Sean Parker was forced to resign from Facebook as he was caught by police at his vacation home throwing a party and found cocaine in his possession. He would later step down as president in 2005.<sup>42</sup>

As of 2008, Facebook amassed 500 million users in 207 countries, with a net value of 25 billion dollars. Mark Zuckerberg is the youngest billionaire in the world, and he was only getting started.

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<sup>41</sup> Skemp, Kerry, MA. "Facebook." *Salem Press Encyclopedia*, May 2024. EBSCOhost, research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=f9d411a1-d470-39af-9001-524a5513739b.

<sup>42</sup> Baxter, Kirk, and Angus Wall, editors. *The Social Network*. Directed by David Fincher, Sony Pictures Entertainment Motion Picture Group, 2010.

## **Chapter II: Facts vs Fiction**

### **Introduction**

In this chapter, will be covering how not only how social media depicts the world around us, but also through the lens of filmmaking, but is everything we watch that is based on so called “true events” 100% real? The 2010 hit drama film “The Social Network” plays a big part in the narrative between what is true and what's not. This chapter will highlight key scenes in the movie that were either exaggerated or scenes that never happened, purely for dramatic effect, thus keeping viewer engagement throughout the film, and will be explaining why filmmakers do this in films depicting true life events.

Nowadays, the film industry has a massive connection with viewers in terms of what the viewer sees, and how they react to it, like social media, watching or creating films is another form of self-expression, when it comes to what movie, actor, genre we like, there is always something there for someone, a bit like social media. When Mark Zuckerberg created Facebook, he wanted the world to connect with one another, a new and digital version of bringing peace amongst others and exploring other people's personalities and cultures. Although the art of filmmaking does have a similar role in how we, the observer, sees things through a screen, it tends to share similar the internet has, that been fake news. Although the viewer intends to believe that everything they are watching in a film is based on “true events”, but films that portray that title tend to make a certain topic/scene, a bit more intriguing or exciting, mainly for viewer engagement, even when the topic itself, based on real events is not what happened.

"The Social Network," directed by David Fincher and written by Aaron Sorkin, captures the important, memorable and ugly scenes surrounding the creation of Facebook. While the film was massively praised for the portrayals of Mark Zuckerberg and its founding of Facebook, it is important to note the difference between the decorating changes made for drama and the reality. Although a lot of what the film discusses is pretty accurate and true to its extent, there are some keys parts and moments in the film that were not entirely true compared to the film. The depiction of events between 2003 and 2010 brings forward into question into the true meaning behind some of the most memorable scenes in The Social Network and will start off with the accusations of animal cruelty against Eduardo Saverin.

In the early stages of the film, the viewer is introduced to Eduardo Saverin (played by Andrew Garfield), a confident and outgoing Harvard student, excited about the possibility of working on Facebook with his friends and hoping to make something out of it. Besides being the promoter for Facebook, Saverin would not be shy to hang out with other friends in Harvard. He would be accepted into the prestigious Pheonix S.K club. The Pheonix club is an all-male final club in Harvard. It is a society-based club, but like most finals' clubs in Harvard, you must be invited to take part in events and challenges, only then, could a student become a true member. In “The Social Network” some of the challenges presented were drinking games, reciting Harvard alumni and founding members of past Harvard lecturers and workers.



Figure 4- Saverin and Zuckerberg in “The Social Network” (played by Jesse Eisenberg & Andrew Garfield)

One unexpected subplot presented in the film was that Saverin was tasked to take care of a live chicken for several weeks to be initiated into the Pheonix club, which turned out to be factual in

real life. However, the story flips upside down, still in the early stages of the film, where Saverin would be accused by “The Harvard Crimson” for making the chicken eat other types of meat, which was seen as forced cannibalism and a sign of animal cruelty. This was reported by an anonymous source to the crimson.<sup>43</sup> This would further escalate as the crimson would go to state “A national animal rights group is urging the University to investigate unsubstantiated allegations that the Phoenix, S.K. final club has made new members take part in “torturing and killing live chickens” as part of the group’s initiation rites.”<sup>44</sup>

This controversy comes up several times in the film as another wedge in the friendship between Zuckerberg and Saverin, as Zuckerberg felt that the

<sup>43</sup> Baxter, Kirk, and Angus Wall, editors. *The Social Network*. Directed by David Fincher, Sony Pictures Entertainment Motion Picture Group, 2010.

<sup>44</sup> “Phoenix Accused of Animal Cruelty | News | the Harvard Crimson.” [www.thecrimson.com](http://www.thecrimson.com), [www.thecrimson.com/article/2003/12/8/phoenix-accused-of-animal-cruelty-a/](http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2003/12/8/phoenix-accused-of-animal-cruelty-a/). Accessed 21 May 2024.



controversy could hurt the business, whereas Saverin was suspicious that it might have been Zuckerberg that tipped off the Harvard Crimson for leaking such information.<sup>45</sup> Although there was a story printed in 2003, detailing the accusations of the Phoenix torturing chickens, there was no mentioning or evidence of Eduardo Saverin being the main culprit of the charge.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Baxter, Kirk, and Angus Wall, editors. *The Social Network*. Directed by David Fincher, Sony Pictures Entertainment Motion Picture Group, 2010.

<sup>46</sup> "Phoenix Accused of Animal Cruelty | News | the Harvard Crimson." *www.thecrimson.com*, [www.thecrimson.com/article/2003/12/8/phoenix-accused-of-animal-cruelty-a/](http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2003/12/8/phoenix-accused-of-animal-cruelty-a/). Accessed 21 May 2024.

Another example of *The Social Network* exaggerating on so called “true events” was the antagonistic rivalry between Eduardo Saverin and Sean Parker.



Figure 5- Sean Parker in “*The Social Network*” (Played by Justin Timberlake)

A key part for driving the film, and will forever be memorable, as the rivalry between Sean Parker and Eduardo Saverin would be brought up numerous times, driving the intensity and suspension to

viewers as it would reach its final climax towards to latter stages of the film. At around the midpoint of the film, both Zuckerberg and Saverin would get their first interaction with Sean Parker, the cocreator of the infamous music sharing website “Napster”.<sup>47</sup>

With his wittiness, and optimistic attitude, plus his vast amounts of connections in California, from his time at Napster, he was selling the idea he would bring Facebook to the top of the technological pyramid, and Zuckerberg was sold on the idea. Saverin on the other hand, was a bit cynical, and for valid reasons.

<sup>47</sup> Boslaugh, Sarah. “Sean Parker.” *Salem Press Biographical Encyclopedia*, Mar. 2024. EBSCOhost, research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=63334eed-df2f-3045-98d5-c09fdc95a66b.

Parker would be known to be a bit of a party animal during his time, as well as being on the other side of controversy, as Napster was a streaming music service for anyone to listen to music for free illegally, which only angered the music industry. A notable example of this is the



Figure 6 – An irate Eduardo Saverin confronting Zuckerberg in “The Social Network”

heavy metal band “Metallica” suing Napster for 10 million dollars for illegally downloading mp3 files of their music.<sup>48</sup> Saverin’s skepticism was valid, as throughout the film, the two would find it harder to work together. Saverin makes it his mission to convince Zuckerberg and everyone around him that he is not important to the company, whilst Parker is hoping to get Saverin kicked out and replaced. This leads to the number of arguments and actions both Zuckerberg and Saverin would inflict on each other in the film.<sup>49</sup> The film would cement the bitterness between the three with its use of eerie and daunting music, symbolizing that this conclusion was only going to end in one way.<sup>50</sup>

Contrary to what the film portrays, it has been mentioned before that the so-called rivalry between Saverin and Parker was nowhere near, the level of intensity as it was in real life. However, the real Sean Parker would reinstate that there is no bad blood between the two and has insisted that the pair are good friends.

In an interview with “Mashable” he would call the film is a work of fiction and that the narrative behind the rivalry is heavily depicted, stating: “The part of the movie that frustrated me is actually the scene at the end where the character played by Justin Timberlake -- who happens to have my name -- basically writes a check to Eduardo – who I'm also, I consider Eduardo a friend of mine, and I'm one of the few

<sup>48</sup> Marshall, Lee. “Metallica and Morality: The Rhetorical Battleground of the Napster Wars.” *The Entertainment and Sports Law Journal*, vol. 1, no. 1, Mar. 2002, p. 2, <https://doi.org/10.16997/eslj.182>.

<sup>49</sup> Baxter, Kirk, and Angus Wall, editors. *The Social Network*. Directed by David Fincher, Sony Pictures Entertainment Motion Picture Group, 2010.

<sup>50</sup> NOW PLAYING. “Mark Gets Rid of His People | the Social Network (2010) | Now Playing.” *YouTube*, 3 Mar. 2023, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=1SGg3QxYvS0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1SGg3QxYvS0). Accessed 14 Feb. 2025.

people at Facebook who still interacts with Eduardo – and throws it in his face and has security escort him out of the building. And I mean, that's just rude. This guy in the movie is a morally reprehensible human being.”<sup>51</sup>

Saverin's reasoning for leaving the company was not so much of conflict between Parker and himself, but with other business endeavors and Zuckerberg's change of vision which made him leave Facebook but keep his title as the CFO of Facebook, raising the questions of narrative clarity in drama related films.

As “The Social Network” grew as a big movie, it would eventually catch up with Mark Zuckerberg and therefore, would have to speak up about it, as the film portrays him as a spineless villain, something of which he does not want to carry around.

Unsurprisingly to most, Zuckerberg was not a fan of the movie. Speaking on the Oprah Winfrey show, he would mention that all the partying references were fiction as he spent years working hard and coding for Facebook.<sup>52</sup> Although he was speaking his truth on the film, he was respectful of the overall movie, stating: "It's a movie; it's fun," he says. "A lot of it is fiction, but even the filmmakers will say that. They're trying to build a good story, but I'm going to promise you, this is my life, so I know it's not so dramatic."<sup>53</sup>

However, in a question-and-answer interview with “business insider”, he would address how The Social Network got some details right, such as the design of the offices and Zuckerberg's choice of clothing. However, he would go on to mention that the film made a few inaccurate storylines in the film that were never true in real life.

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<sup>51</sup> White, Charlie. “Sean Parker Says ‘the Social Network’ Is ‘Fiction.’” *Mashable*, Mashable.com, 23 Jan. 2011, mashable.com/archive/sean-parker-quotes.

<sup>52</sup> “Viewers React to Waiting for Superman.” *Oprah.com*, 24 Sept. 2010, www.oprah.com/oprahshow/viewers-react-to-waiting-for-superman/11. Accessed 14 Feb. 2025.

<sup>53</sup> “Viewers React to Waiting for Superman.” *Oprah.com*, 24 Sept. 2010, www.oprah.com/oprahshow/viewers-react-to-waiting-for-superman/11. Accessed 14 Feb. 2025.

The one being the most intriguing to him is at the very start of the film, where Zuckerberg's girlfriend "Erica Albright" dumps him at the Harvard College bar, over disputes of their different personalities and levels of intelligence. The real Zuckerberg shut that storyline rumour down, stating: "I'm with this girl who does not exist in real life who dumps me... the whole point of creating Facebook was to get girls", <sup>54</sup> when Zuckerberg has been dating the same girl long before he ever created Facebook.

He would finally finish the question with a good point stating: "It is such a big disconnect from, I think the way that people who make movies think what we do in silicon valley is building stuff... they just can't wrap their head around, the idea that someone might build something because they like building things" <sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> "From Business Insider: Zuckerberg on the Social Network." *Www.youtube.com*, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=1qfcWSZAHvM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1qfcWSZAHvM).

<sup>55</sup> "From Business Insider: Zuckerberg on the Social Network." *Www.youtube.com*, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=1qfcWSZAHvM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1qfcWSZAHvM).

## **Conclusion**

In the end, The Social Network produces an engaging and dramatic narrative about the company's growth from 2003 to 2010. However, while been displayed as a biographical film, it does not intend to be an accurate portrayal of the history of Facebook's creation and Zuckerberg's rise. The accusations of animal cruelty, disputes with CFO's and president's, and Zuckerberg's overall motivation to create Facebook to connect people together, rather than personal vendettas, shows that although The Social Network was a hit, financially and globally, but it was inaccurate when it comes to the big weighted scenes, that drives the viewer to the edge of their seats in anticipation. Knowing that these important scenes were not true would make the viewer of the film feel disappointed that it was not true.

Watching or analyzing "The Social Network", one cannot avoid reflecting on the intertwining elements of storytelling within reality. So much so that one has to ask: what does it mean to construct a narrative within the realm of truth? How do we incorporate truth while pursuing art? At its core "The Social Network" acts as a launching point for discourse about biography, creativity, technology, and the complex interpersonal relations associated with them. All these aspects offer a deeper understanding into the controversial developments leading toward the foundation of one of the most significant social platforms in recent history. In the end, movies like "The Social Network" will have the goal of making a film accurate as they can, but being 100% accurate is never all that easy, as film directors will want to add something extra to the scene, purely for shock value and dramatic effect.

## **Chapter III: Likes and Data Breaches**

“So, this was a major breach of trust, and I’m really sorry this happened. We have a basic responsibility to protect people's data, and if we can't do that, then we do not deserve to have the opportunity to serve people.” <sup>56</sup>

### **Introduction**

This chapter deep dives into data breaches/scandals and Facebook promoting violence on their platform, ignoring pleas from journalists and other Facebook users to do the right thing to take it down, leading to Zuckerberg having to explain himself in front of the world live at the US congress in 2018, giving inspiration for the Documentary “Zuckerberg: King of the Metaverse”

Despite the issues outside of Facebook, the company itself would only continue to grow exponentially. Facebook would have 350 million users on its platform by the end of 2009. <sup>57</sup> The company was showing no signs of slowing down, and did not believe the company was at its peak yet, despite the countless amounts of attention and popularity it was getting.

There was one small issue that Facebook had never properly addressed after the case settlements for Eduardo Saverin, Divya Narendra, and Cameron and Tyler Winklevoss from 5 years ago, and that was the access of people's personal information. Quite like Facemash, (See page 5) Zuckerberg realized that it was easy to obtain people’s personal data and their interests, which

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<sup>56</sup> Zuckerberg, Mark and 1, Speaker, "CNN Interview after Cambridge Analytica" (2018). *Zuckerberg Videos*. Video 234. [https://epublications.marquette.edu/zuckerberg\\_files\\_videos/234](https://epublications.marquette.edu/zuckerberg_files_videos/234)

<sup>57</sup> Green, Nick. *Zuckerberg: King of the Metaverse*. Edited by Adam Finch et al., Rogan Productions, Sky Studios, 11 Jan. 2024, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=LHpJfq71PNc&t=514s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LHpJfq71PNc&t=514s). Accessed 1 Dec. 2024.

would then be used to show you content you may like based on your preferences.

One thing Zuckerberg never wished to happen was for Facebook to be another “Friendster” or “Myspace,” where it was limited in capabilities with what you can do and share. Fast forward to mid 2010’s, Facebook has just bought Instagram for a billion dollars, they have also acquired WhatsApp for 16 billion dollars,<sup>58</sup> and Facebook finally hit the one billion user mark for the first time in 2012, Zuckerberg has just connected close to 15% of the world population on Facebook. He has brought countries from all over the world together, to be a part of Facebook groups and sharing content around the world.

In the Documentary, “Zuckerberg: king of the metaverse,” the interviewee would explain how Zuckerberg had the technology to create an algorithmic device, that would automatically show the user what they want to see based on their information that they have given to Facebook and what they look up online. It would make the decision for you in what you wanted to see, and this is what Zuckerberg needed, this is how you get people hooked on a social platform. You, the user, do not have to do anything in terms of what you are interested in, because Facebook already knows you from your information and interests. It is incredible, yet scary at the same time.<sup>59</sup> The scary part being, that if it is easy to post and say whatever you want, then it is just as easy to promote and to spread fake news, something Facebook is all too common with.

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<sup>58</sup> Deutsch, Alison. “WhatsApp: The Best Facebook Purchase Ever?” *Investopedia*, 2019, [www.investopedia.com/articles/investing/032515/whatsapp-best-facebook-purchase-ever.asp](http://www.investopedia.com/articles/investing/032515/whatsapp-best-facebook-purchase-ever.asp).

<sup>59</sup> Green, Nick. *Zuckerberg: King of the Metaverse*. Edited by Adam Finch et al., Rogan Productions, Sky Studios, 11 Jan. 2024, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=LHpJfq71PNc&t=514s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LHpJfq71PNc&t=514s). Accessed 1 Dec. 2024.



To put it simply, “Fake news” is misleading or false information, claiming to legitimize a story or piece of news, to damage a person or companies' reputation for their personal, and or, financial gain online. (False statements, Conspiracy theories, Rumours)

When Zuckerberg created Facebook, it wasn't as complexed as it is today, all you had to do was answer a few questions about yourself, what you are into etc., to get access to Facebook, but some of the questions would ask about your email address, phone number, your relationship status, as well as your political stance.<sup>60</sup>

Most people would add all that information in without thinking twice, as a way to get access to Facebook, but hesitant users, however, believed it was an invasion of their privacy. It would be a cause for concern for any Facebook user at that time, not knowing that this was already a problem half a decade ago. He wanted everyone to stay in the loop in what was going on in the world and wanted Facebook to be limitless in what you can do as the user, Zuckerberg, however, did not realize that being limitless can be an issue to anyone who uses Facebook.

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<sup>60</sup> Green, Nick. *Zuckerberg: King of the Metaverse*. Edited by Adam Finch et al., Rogan Productions, Sky Studios, 11 Jan. 2024, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=LHpJfq71PNc&t=514s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LHpJfq71PNc&t=514s). Accessed 1 Dec. 2024.



Figure 7– A Muslim man holding a banner displaying love for Facebook

Facebook does have its dark side, with spreading false information, fake news, and for users to post anti-semitic/hate crime videos online. One

example being Violence

against Myanmar’s minority Muslim community back in 2014. They were called “The Rohingya people,” a stateless ethnic group who follow and resided in the Rakhine state of Myanmar. <sup>61</sup>

The ethnic Muslim group are denied the right to a nationality and face severe restrictions on their rights to freedom of movement, access to education, healthcare, and livelihoods. Between August 2017 – July 2020, more than 100 Rohingya refugees have been allegedly killed, tortured, raped, and displaced in extrajudicial executions, according to Odhikar, a Bangladeshi human rights organization, via “Amnesty”. <sup>62</sup>

<sup>61</sup> “This Is What Happens When Millions of People Suddenly Get the Internet.” *BuzzFeed News*, [www.buzzfeednews.com/article/sheerafrenkel/fake-news-spreads-trump-around-the-world](http://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/sheerafrenkel/fake-news-spreads-trump-around-the-world).

<sup>62</sup> “Rohingya: The Deadly Situation & What to Do about It.” *Www.amnesty.org.uk*, 25 Feb. 2021, [www.amnesty.org.uk/rohingya-deadly-situation-and-what-do-about-it](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/rohingya-deadly-situation-and-what-do-about-it).

Due to Facebook’s digital media algorithm, it showed users graphic and disturbing images, videos and comments about Muslims and spreading hate and death to all who believe in Islam. In an interview with on 2024 documentary “Zuckerberg: King of the Metaverse”, Buzzfeed journalist “Sheera Frenkel” would talk about her trip to Myanmar and mention that Rohingya people were falsely accused as killers and rapists on Facebook, to which Sheera would contact Facebook and explain why this should not be on here, and in her words: “Facebook told me to take a hike”.<sup>63</sup>



Figure 8– Rohingya Muslim refugees react after being re-united with each other after arriving on a boat from Myanmar on September 08, 2017

Since the people of Myanmar can access the internet and access Facebook, they had the power to make themselves look like the good guys and give off this false perception of making the

Rohingya people look like the bad ones.<sup>64</sup> This is one of many prime examples of false news and widespread hate against a vulnerable ethnic minority, something Facebook was well informed of, but did not do anything to prevent it.

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Similarly, another man would use Facebook to benefit his cause to become the 45<sup>th</sup> president of the United States, and his name is Donald Trump. Trump was never a politician to begin with, he began his career as a wealthy successful

<sup>63</sup> Green, Nick. *Zuckerberg: King of the Metaverse*. Edited by Adam Finch et al., Rogan Productions, Sky Studios, 11 Jan. 2024, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=LHpJfq71PNc&t=514s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LHpJfq71PNc&t=514s). Accessed 1 Dec. 2024.

<sup>64</sup> The Rohingya Refugee Taking on Meta’s Bias Algorithm.” *YouTube*, 2024, [youtu.be/R6OeG8P0pIM?si=i1kxTEOBDeNZ25D](https://youtu.be/R6OeG8P0pIM?si=i1kxTEOBDeNZ25D). Accessed 18 Feb. 2025.

businessman, based in New York City, growing up from a wealthy background, thanks to his father, Donald Trump Snr. He would be one of the biggest names and faces in America in the 80's and 90's.

When it would be heard that Trump will be running for presidency in 2016, a lot of people did not think this was going to last long, they believed this was just was a PR stunt to get attention and then he would drop out soon. Zuckerberg believed in connecting the world together, whereas Trump believed in the exact opposite of that, but he knew the only way his team and himself were to promote his philosophy and way of thinking out there to beat Hillary Clinton, was to use Facebook to promote himself.

Whether you loved him or hate him, people would have an immediate reaction to Trump on Facebook, and that is how the Facebook algorithm worked for Trump. The more you search up Donald Trump's account, Facebook will immediately show you more of him, and he knew, the more he bended the algorithm and, shouted his political views online, the more he'll seem likely to win, the way he bended the algorithm, was to really be himself... unfiltered and unapologetic.



*Figure 9 – Donald Trump's Muslim immigration video posted onto Facebook*

Facebook had an issue with Trump, as he used the power of free speech to target his audience in person and online, and that being his right-wing ideologies. A prime example of that being when Trump's team put

out a video on Facebook of Trump at one of his rallies stating if he were to be

elected president of the United States, he would put a ban on all Muslims entering the United States until he can quote “figure out what the hell is going on.”<sup>65</sup>

This would prove me to be challenging for Facebook, as the Hillary Clinton party was also using Facebook to get to her target audience, but doing it in a much more ordinary way, so if Facebook were to start shutting down videos belonging to Trump, this will give Trump supporters the excuse to abuse Facebook and Zuckerberg, in a way, Trump had gotten one over Zuckerberg.

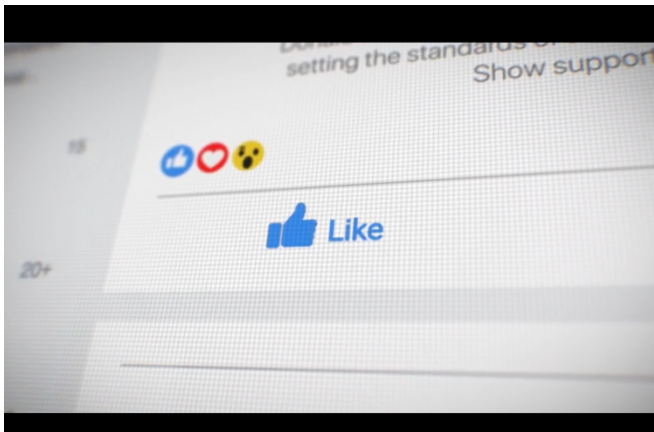


Figure 10– Facebook like button

Research from the “Journal of Economic Perspectives” showed that they record 41 pro-Clinton (or anti-Trump) and 115 pro-Trump (or anti-Clinton) articles, which were shared on Facebook a total of 7.6 million and 30.3 million times, respectively. Thus,

there are about three times more fake pro-Trump articles than pro-Clinton articles, and the average pro-Trump article was shared more on Facebook than the average pro-Clinton article.<sup>66</sup>

That is until March 2018, a data consulting firm named Cambridge Analytica from London, England. They had questionnaires on Facebook where you would take surveys about who you are as a person, your hobbies etc., and then you get paid a small amount for doing the quiz, through a Facebook personality quiz called “thisisyourdigitalife.”

<sup>65</sup> Green, Nick. *Zuckerberg: King of the Metaverse*. Edited by Adam Finch et al., Rogan Productions, Sky Studios, 11 Jan. 2024, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=LHpJfq71PNc&t=514s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LHpJfq71PNc&t=514s). Accessed 1 Dec. 2024.

<sup>66</sup> Allcott, Hunt, and Matthew Gentzkow. “Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election.” *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, vol. 31, no. 2, 2017, pp. 211–35. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44235006>. Accessed 15 Dec. 2024.

The app not only collected personal data from tens and thousands of Facebook users, but also personal information of people's Facebook friends from the users who took Cambridge Analytica's survey in 2016. Throughout the app staying up, Cambridge Analytica obtained over 50 million Facebook user accounts.

During which, at the time, Cambridge had been working on the Donald Trump campaign beforehand. They have managed to take 50 million accounts and allegedly, it was used to stir in the direction of Donald Trump to win the US presidency in 2016, all without user's consent or knowledge for close to 2 years.

According to media reports, Facebook initially ignored the data breach and attempted to suppress the story. Eventually, it would take Zuckerberg 5 days to acknowledge the leak of personal data. It claimed Cambridge Analytica no longer had access to the information when it did. The scandal not only caused a public backlash against Facebook, it hurt the company's stock performance but also spurred lawmakers in both the United States and Great Britain to call for measures to be taken.<sup>67</sup>

Lawmakers in Washington had been attempting for a year to get Mark Zuckerberg to testify to the Cambridge scandal, as to the Myanmar genocide, and the spread of fake news from the last five plus years, to which had simply refused to comply. Eventually, Washington threatened Zuckerberg with a subpoena (ordering a person to attend court) and he agreed.<sup>68</sup>

On the 10<sup>th</sup> April, Zuckerberg would enter the Capital hill building in Washington DC, testifying in front of congress, with media and TV crews and vans swarming outside Congress. Still having that same Mark Zuckerberg facial expression as

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<sup>67</sup> Purdy, Elizabeth Rholetter. "Mark Zuckerberg." *Salem Press Biographical Encyclopedia*, July 2024. EBSCOhost, research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=6b2f2995-bfb9-3af3-ab51-8dbfca76b253.

<sup>68</sup> Green, Nick. *Zuckerberg: King of the Metaverse*. Edited by Adam Finch et al., Rogan Productions, Sky Studios, 11 Jan. 2024, www.youtube.com/watch?v=LHpJfq71PNc&t=514s. Accessed 1 Dec. 2024.

he had when he was a teenager, hoping, theoretically, he can get out of this alive.

Zuckerberg knew that the odds of failing and looking bad were high, so he knew he had to be laser focused when it came to the trial, because it was not just the people who've fallen victim to the Cambridge scandal, or the world fake news that gets spread on Facebook, but entirely, the world will be watching this, tuning in to see if this was either the end of Mark Zuckerberg and Facebook, or potentially, a rebirth for them.

Throughout the hearing, the congress was asking very basic and simple questions that didn't seem to put Zuckerberg off or think twice about, asking questions if Facemash was still a website, when it's been gone for over a decade, and asking how does Facebook sustain a business when it's a free app, to which Zuckerberg would simply reply "Senator, we run ads". The problem was that most of the questions asked to Zuckerberg were not jarring or grilling into him like he thought they would, and because of this, he knew he would have them wrapped around his finger if it stayed like it. <sup>69</sup>

The only question that got Zuckerberg during the entire hearing was when Senator Dick Durban asked Zuckerberg a good question in terms of his right to privacy stating:

Dick Durbin: "Mr. Zuckerberg, would you be comfortable sharing with us, the name of the hotel you stayed at last night?"

Zuckerberg: "Uhm... Ugh no."

Dick Durban: "If you've messaged anyone in the last week, would you share with us, the names of the people you've messaged?"

Zuckerberg: "Senator no, I'd probably not choose to do that publicly here."

Dick Durban: "I think that might be what this is all about, your right to privacy, the limits of your right to privacy, and how much you give away in modern America, in the name of quote, connecting people around the world. The question basically of, what information Facebook is collecting, who they are sending it to, and whether

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<sup>69</sup> The Washington Post, "Mark Zuckerberg's Senate hearing" (2018). *Zuckerberg Videos*. Video 253. [https://epublications.marquette.edu/zuckerberg\\_files\\_videos/253](https://epublications.marquette.edu/zuckerberg_files_videos/253)



they were asked in advance for permission to do that. Is that a fair thing for a user of Facebook to expect?”<sup>70 71 72</sup>



Figure 11 – Mark Zuckerberg at the court hearing in the US congress in 2018

After the hearing, Zuckerberg would take responsibility, stating quote: “It was my mistake, and I am sorry. “I started Facebook, I run it, and I am responsible for what happens here. “It is clear

now that we did not do enough to prevent these tools from being used for harm. That goes for fake news, foreign interference in elections, and hate speech, as well as developers and data privacy.”<sup>73</sup> The hearing would be adjourned. Zuckerberg came out of it very well, and felt like he won against congress, which, he did, as no major punishment happened for him, one way of really telling that Facebook came out the winner in this, was the fact that Facebooks’ stock rose. Mark Zuckerberg became billions of dollars richer.



Figure 12– Donald Trump’s “Stop the steal” Facebook page

2 years on after the speaking to the senate, Donald Trump and Joe Biden would compete in the US presidential election, and Trump would lose to Biden by the narrowest of margins, however trump did not take his lose respectively, and had threaten that a storm will happen

<sup>70</sup> Green, Nick. *Zuckerberg: King of the Metaverse*. Edited by Adam Finch et al., Rogan Productions, Sky Studios, 11 Jan. 2024, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=LHpJfq71PNc&t=514s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LHpJfq71PNc&t=514s). Accessed 1 Dec. 2024.

<sup>71</sup> SenatorDurbin. “Durbin Questions Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg.” *YouTube*, 10 Apr. 2018, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=KG1HhabRTAo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KG1HhabRTAo). Accessed 10 Feb. 2025.

<sup>72</sup> “Durbin Questions Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg | U.S. Senator Dick Durbin of Illinois.” *www.durbin.senate.gov*, [www.durbin.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/durbin-questions-facebook-ceo-mark-zuckerberg](https://www.durbin.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/durbin-questions-facebook-ceo-mark-zuckerberg).

<sup>73</sup> Green, Nick. *Zuckerberg: King of the Metaverse*. Edited by Adam Finch et al., Rogan Productions, Sky Studios, 11 Jan. 2024, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=LHpJfq71PNc&t=514s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LHpJfq71PNc&t=514s). Accessed 1 Dec. 2024.

regarding his lose. A couple of days previous before the 6<sup>th</sup> of January 2021, a Facebook page by the name of “Stop the steal” was a group that spread the false information that the 2020 election was stolen from Donald Trump. Thousands of Trump supporters descend to Washington and stormed the Capital building. This was looking just as bad as it could have been for Zuckerberg, as this will only make Facebook look just as bad as it did before.

## Conclusion

Mark Zuckerberg only had one option and that was to remove the page and banned Donald Trump from Facebook until indefinitely. 9 months later, Facebook whistleblower Francis Haugen had come out against Facebook stating that the company protects profit over young people's Mental Health, actively promoting hate speech, and being a threat to Democracy.



*Figure 13 – Facebook “whistleblower”, Francis Haugen, giving an interview on her backstory working for Facebook*

3 weeks after Francis Haugen's statement, Facebook announces a rebranding. Zuckerberg would state on Facebook live that all his

company owned apps (Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp etc.,) would be under one roof, and that would be named, “Meta.” He wanted to rebrand to move away from all the scandals and controversy he has endured over the last 5 years.

## **Final Conclusion**

As we reflect on the last twenty years into Facebook's life span, it is clear that the company has faced massive amounts of controversy, scandals, and unmatched notoriety after coming to the spotlight. Mark Zuckerberg founded Facebook as simply a social media website in 2004. Now, it serves as one of the most powerful and controversial companies in the integrated world. Issues regarding privacy violation, misinformation, data breaches, and above all, the Cambridge Analytica Crisis have marked Facebook's legacy over the years. Cambridge Analytica is not the only crisis Facebook had to deal with, but it certainly is the most prominent. On numerous occasions, Facebook has been known to promote content that lends itself to political extremism, violence, and social unrest. In all these issues, Facebook is caught in the middle and must face the impacts of its own policies and technology on modern life and society.

Facebook's ambition has expanded beyond social connectivity, they are now moving into Virtual Realities, Digital Commerce, and more recently, the Metaverse. The initial goal of social media integration is still being used to unite billions across the globe. However, with great power comes great responsibility. There has been a growing hesitation regarding the influence of this single entity, raising serious concerns about corporate & political meddling and a potential to feed more misinformation and violence on Meta, if no real significant privacy has been made.

Facebook is known for constantly being under fire for matters of user jeopardy, mental health, and information that is put forth to billions of users. The platform has played a significant role in connecting billions of users around the world, but this achievement has been scarred by an ongoing debate about user safety, mental health implications, and the integrity of information shared on its platform.

After speaking to the author of “The Facebook effect” David Kirkpatrick, to get his opinion on the state of Facebook now, he would go on to say: “it is a strange and sad story but also one of great achievement. Very complex. I still stay that despite all my criticisms Meta is probably 50.01% a positive force in the world.”

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As of 2024, Facebook remains an app of unknown certainty for some users in the world today. Over the last twenty years, it has seen levels of unprecedented growth and success and has undoubtedly changed the way we view social media today, but it has opened the door for the evil side of things too. Only time will tell if Mark Zuckerberg ever makes amends to the world and proves that Facebook is still an app for everyone to be on to connect, but the real question is, is connecting the world for the better or for the worse?

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<sup>74</sup> Kirkpatrick, David. *Facebook*. 1 Dec. 2024.

it's a strange and sad story but also one of great achievement. Very complex. I still stay that despite all my criticisms Meta is probably 50.01% a positive force in the world..

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