

LECTURE 2: Communicating with Social Media

This topic will address the way we perceive ourselves and others, and the factors that influence the perception of our selves either positively or negatively.

Intended Learning Outcomes



As a result of this lecture, you should be able to:

- Understand the roles of Social and Mass Media
- Critically analyze mediated Versus Face-to-Face Communication
- Understand the socio-cultural change and changing technologies of social media
- Explain the changing communication discipline as well as demographics of media users.
- Discuss communication competence in social media.

Understanding the roles of Social and Mass Media

Mass Media has professional gatekeepers; includes television, streaming, and music services as well as traditional news sources such as newspapers and cable news networks. Traditional mass media was made up of electronic and print media. The Gatekeepers are the people in a small group through whom communication among other members flows. In mass media gate keepers control information that reaches the masses. Mass communication used to have gatekeepers: people that controlled what information the public received. Social media has changed that: Now, anyone can amass an audience and share whatever they want at any time. Is this as a change for the better or a change for the worse? The public *need* reliable, intelligent and relevant sources which they can go to for news, thus creating a push to try and deregulate click bait and fake news within the media. The role of a gatekeeper within journalism is of extreme importance in today's media environment. Gatekeepers ultimately craft and conduct what is being published to the masses; therefore they determine what is to become the public's social reality, and their view of the world (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). Gate keeping as a theory, is the news selection and

extraction of news, which then gets passed through a series of gates (the journalists), and gets transformed and ends up in the news (Groshek & Tandoc, 2016).

There is need for gatekeeping journalists, especially due to the high consumption rates of click bait, fake news and non-journalistic social media pages. This is because professional journalists need to assert control over news construction, as there needs to be a regulated system which audiences can access for educational and topical news (Groshek & Tandoc, 2016). Social Media platform are dynamic websites and applications that allow individual users to create and share content or to participate in social networking activities.

Use of modern technology: Modern mass communication requires the use of various specialized modern technologies such as computer, computer network, fax, mobile phones, broadcasting media, printing devices etc. for effective preparation and distribution of message. At last, we can say that the above stated features of mass communication have given it a separate entity form those of other types of general communication.

Characteristics of Social Media

What is social media?

These are websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking. Social media can also be described as the collection of online platforms that involve sharing and collaborating with an online community by posting, commenting, and interacting with one another. The most commonly used social media platforms today are Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, LinkedIn, and Snapchat.

Characteristics

Social media has User-Generated Content Individuals, not just big networks or companies can create content. It has Variable Audience Size target audience may vary depending on the platform and type of content generated. Interactivity Social media allows users to actually talk back and forth rather than the one-way communication of traditional mass media.

Mediation also implies some form of relationship. Relationships that are mediated through mass media are likely to be more distant, more impersonal and weaker than direct personal ties. The mass media do not monopolize the flow of information we

receive, nor do they intervene in all our wider social relations, but their presence is inevitably very pervasive. Early versions of the idea of 'mediation of reality' were inclined to assume a division between a public terrain in which a widely shared view of reality was constructed by way of mass media messages, and a personal sphere where individuals could communicate freely and directly. More recent developments of technology have undermined this simple division, since a much larger share of communication and thus of our contact with others and our environmental reality is mediated via technology (telephone, computer, fax, e-mail, etc.), although on an individual and a private basis. The implications of this change are still unclear and subject to diverse interpretations. Other characteristics of social media include:

1. Identity- users reveal identity through profiles
2. Conversations- communicating
3. Sharing- exchanging and receiving content
4. Presence- if others are available, accessible
5. Relationship- connections with each other
6. Reputation- trust and standing, noteworthy
7. Groups- communities within a network

Social Media Uses and Gratifications **Uses and Gratifications of Social Media**

The basic premise of uses and gratifications theory is that **individuals will seek out media among competitors that fulfills their needs and leads to ultimate gratifications by means such as Share and Learn, Connect with Others, Present and Identity, Establish and Meet Goals, Influence Others**

The ten uses and gratifications are: **social interaction, information seeking, pass time, entertainment, relaxation, communicatory utility, convenience utility, expression of opinion, information sharing**, and surveillance/knowledge about others.

Masspersonal Communication

The new masspersonal phenomenon combines *social media* with personal reasons for communicating. Social media are interactive and are distinguished by user-generated content.

Even prior to the rise of social network sites (SNS), media have blurred the lines of mass and interpersonal communication. Traditionally interpersonal media, such as e-mail, can reach large groups of people simultaneously, while traditionally mass media, such as newspapers, offer forums for readers to respond. The popularity of SNS has led to a resurgence in the calls for an integrated framework that recognizes the convergence of personalized communication within large and heterogeneous networks in social media .

The masspersonal communication model (MPCM; O'Sullivan & Carr, 2017) proposes a communication, rather than medium-centered, approach to understanding communication along the dimensions of anticipated audience size from the sender's perspective and perceived message personalization from the receiver's perspective. Together, these dimensions create a masspersonal space, which encompasses “public-yet-personalized communication” via channels that enable broader access to interpersonal communication (e.g., Facebook, radio call-in)

Mediated Versus Face-to-Face Communication

Mediated communication differs from the face-to-face form through the following aspects:

Message Richness the extent to which nonverbal cues can clarify a message. The effectiveness of social media to communicate messages can depend on the platform and the channels used

Richness the degree to which nonverbal cues can clarify a verbal message

Leanness: A lack of nonverbal cues to clarify a message. Remember, nonverbal communication accounts for 65-90% of the message so when nonverbal communication is lacking, the message will be more ambiguous. Ambiguity increases and leanness increases, raising the risk for poor communication and misunderstandings between users.

Hyperpersonal communication: the phenomenon in which digital interaction creates deeper relationships than arise through face-to-face communication

Polymediation: The range of communication channel options available to communicators. It is how we choose between possible channels and platforms to share messages. For example, we may choose Snapchat to interact with friends but rely on email and phone calls for work.

Synchronous communication is communication that occurs in real time

Asynchronous communication is communication that occurs when there's a lag between receiving and responding to messages

Synchronous communication means that two or more people exchange information in real-time. In most workplaces communication happens that way and people expect real-time responses. Asynchronous communication refers to the exchange of data between two or more parties without the requirement for all the recipients to respond immediately. For example, your colleague can leave you a message in a topic feed on status.net and not worry about disturbing you. You will read the information when ready, consume it, take your time to decide on it, and answer when you're available. This approach frees both parties from the need to be synchronized.

Why Asynchronous communication is the future

- **You can focus on your work without being constantly interrupted.**
- **It provides a chance to think twice**—most people don't make the best decisions when they are pressured to answer on the spot.
- **You can decide when to check your messages and when to respond to them.**
- **You have a record of communication that you can refer to when you need to.**
Synchronous communication, on the other hand, often requires taking notes while the other party delivers the message. It can be incredibly easy to misplace the notes or not have access to them when you need them the most, such as during an important business meeting or presentation.
- **It allows you to communicate effectively with remote teams that are spread across different time zones.**

Permanence in Communication Being aware that whatever you may say or post is recorded and potentially online forever. So think about what you want to say or post before you actually go through because chances are it will be on the internet forever, and could mess you up badly in the future.

Identity Management how we present ourselves online. Because we generally have more control of the information that others can learn about us, we're able to construct our identities that may or may not accurately reflect our true selves. People may think we're funny or intelligent because we can take the time to compose what we want to say. We can use filters so we always look our best or chose to share pictures of our smiling, happy family on vacation but not the angry family fighting over what to have for dinner. All of this will shape how others see us online.

<https://status.net/articles/synchronous-vs-asynchronous-communication/>

Benefits and Drawbacks of Social Media

Benefits of Social Media

- Connect = create and maintain relationships
 - Enhance Relationships = sustain relationships across distances and time
 - Social Support = allows users to find a supportive community, which may be done anonymously in some cases
 - Social Advocacy = social movements such as #MeToo and #BLM have increased awareness of important social matters. In addition, online social advocacy groups are able to share resources and support among individual members or chapters as well as to plan events on a larger scale.
- In Business and marketing:

- ***You reach large audiences***

There are millions of people using social media platforms. It's a great opportunity for your business to reach a large pool of people that are interested in your products or services. According to *Pew Research Center*, these are the percentages of U.S. adults that use social media sites online or on mobile:

- YouTube: **73%**
- Facebook: **68%**
- Instagram: **35%**
- Pinterest: **29%**
- Snapchat: **27%**
- LinkedIn: **25%**
- Twitter: **24%**

U.S. adults use many of these sites, which creates great opportunities for your business to reach leads. You have numerous opportunities to reach leads and can engage them on these different platforms.

- **You have a direct connection with your audience**

Social media is one of the few marketing strategies that allow you to connect directly with your audience. You know who is interested in your business because they choose to follow your social media account.

This social media advantage helps your business in numerous ways:

- **You get to know them better:** When you know your audience better, you can deliver more valuable content to them. You make the content more personalized to their interests, which leads to more engagement on your page and with your business.
- **You provide better customer service:** A direct connection with your audience allows you to resolve issues easier. You can address them personally, deal with their issues 1-on-1, and build your brand in a positive light in the process.
- **You gain *valuable insight* about your customers:** The direct connection with your audience helps you get to know your audience better. You see who interacts with your posts and how they interact with them. It helps you adapt your strategy to make it better for your followers.
- **You see how your audience perceives your business:** It's always good to know how others view your business. With social media marketing, you know what your audience thinks of your company. It's a huge advantage of social media marketing because you can capitalize on aspects people like about your business and fix elements they don't like.

Top 13 Advantages and Disadvantages of Social Media <https://www.webfx.com/internet-marketing/social-media-marketing-advantages-and-disadvantages.html>

Drawbacks of Social Media

Social media has a number of drawbacks and these are:

- Superficial = this may mean more superficial relationships with people to whom you're not emotionally connected or it could mean less depth in the communication in "real" friendships.
- Social Isolation = while social media can give allow people who are shy a chance to develop more relationships, it can also create an artificial bubble. If our interaction is primarily online,

and we can strictly control with whom we interact, we will often only interact with those with the same background, music tastes, political beliefs, etc. This may mean we become isolated from those who have a different lived experience than us. When that happens, it can inhibit our ability to practice dual perspectives and may lead to increased ethnocentrism.

- Relationships May Suffer = we sometimes ignore the people physically in the room with us while engaging with others online. See the video "I Forgot My Phone" below.

- Mental Health = research shows more time spent on social media correlates with higher rates of depression and anxiety.

Deception = you could be the victim or the perpetrator of deceptive behavior where a person lies about their identity, experience, etc.

- Harassment = The anonymous and ubiquitous nature of social media increases the ability for someone to harass or stalk a person online or in real life. Cyberbullying is another drawback that can create long-lasting harm.

Online Surveillance: Discreet monitoring of the social media presence of unknowing targets

Cyberstalking ongoing monitoring of the social presence of a person

CASE STUDY

You open up the potential for embarrassment

It's easy for posts to go viral on social media. People keep a close eye on the good and the bad on social media. If you aren't careful about the content you post, you can end up embarrassing your company and getting caught in an awkward situation.

For example, at one point, the hashtag "WhyIStayed" was trending on social media. This hashtag was about victims of domestic violence sharing their story. The hashtag took social media by storm and became a facilitator for conversations about abusive relationships.

DiGiorno Pizza saw this hashtag trending and decided to jump in on an opportunity for brand exposure. They shared a tweet that said, "#WhyIStayed you had pizza." Within minutes, people became outraged at the company for their tweet.

The pizza company hadn't researched the tweet beforehand to realize what it was regarding. The tweet was deleted in minutes, but the impact lasted a long time. People were still talking about the tweet long after it was removed.

This was an embarrassing moment for DiGiorno that blew up over social media. They spent the next few weeks doing damage control and addressing their mistake with thousands of people on Twitter. The carelessness of the tweet made people have a negative perception of DiGiorno.

When you post on social media, there is always an opportunity to embarrass your business on accident. This is a big downside to social media.

Top 13 Advantages and Disadvantages of Social Media <https://www.webfx.com/internet-marketing/social-media-marketing-advantages-and-disadvantages.html>

Influences on Mediated Communication

Gender in Online Communication

Generally speaking, **feminine people communicate more and prioritize communication more than masculine people**. Traditionally, masculine people and feminine people communicate with people of their own gender in different ways.

- Men use more large words, nouns, and profanity than women.
- Women use more personal pronouns, verbs, and hedge phrases like "I Think" and "I Feel"
- Men and Women both use "we" equally, but not in the same way. Women use what called a "Warm we" Ex: "We have so much fun together!" while men use a more "Distant We" ex: "We need to do something about this"
- Women use more emotional words and first-person singular pronouns on Facebook than Men do.
- Teen males are typically more active and assertive with their choice of words than teen females. Teen males initiated online interactions more often than girls and made more flirtatious proposals. Female teens were more reactive in their online posts, using terms like "wow" "omg" and "lmao" in response to others' comments. This was probably also due to the age of the participants.

CASE STUDY

According to Sun B, Mao H and Yin C (2020), their study results show the following: (1) Online technology community posts are divided into four topics: seeking information help, providing information help, technical exchange, and making friends and advertising. Male users tend to provide information help, while female users prefer to participate in the topic of making friends and advertising. (2) When communicating in the technology community, most of the male and female users express positive emotions, but the frequency of female users expressing positive emotions is higher. (3) The emotion of male and female users under different topics in the community has a significant impact on their activity, but the impact is different. In comparison, the activity of female users is more susceptible to emotional tendencies.

Age in Online Communication

At the advent of social media, Pew routinely found that younger Americans (ages 18–29) were significantly more likely to use social media. Now, Pew's data shows the gap has significantly narrowed. Nearly 80% of 30- to 49-year-olds and nearly 65% of 50- to 64-year-olds also use social media, as compared to 88% of 18- to 29-year-olds. And while only 37% of those ages 65 and older use social media, their numbers are growing.

<https://www.waldenu.edu/programs/business/resource/how-age-influences-social-media-preferences>

- Older adults and digital natives vary in the types of preferred mediated communication as well as their comfort level with different platforms. The language and symbols used can also reflect age.
- For 13-18 year-olds, typical terms in their messages include "homework" "math" and "prom." Abbreviations such as "lol," "jk," and "<3" were also common
- 19 to 22-year-olds more often post about college. Terms used are "semester" "studying" and

"Campus" Other lifestyle choices were also prominent in their use of "drunk" "tattoo" and a host of swear words

- Mid 20s people tend to shift more towards topics that involve words such as "office" "pay/paying" and "wedding" But communication at this stage isn't all serious, "beer" is still common
- 30-65 year olds post often about family. Typical terms are "daughter/son" "pray/prayer" "friends" and "country"
- Use of the word "we" tends to increase with age, while the use of I decreases.
- Age can also show based on how punctuation is used.

Technology, Like Social Media, Is Here to Stay

Regardless of age, one thing is for certain: Social media has changed the way we think about information technology. Technology that was once confined to large glass rooms now fits in the palm of our hand. It's portable, it's instant, and it's constantly getting smarter. With so many people using social media across age groups, it's unlikely that it is going anywhere.

But as recent data shows, social media preferences aren't uniform and could continue to diversify in the coming years. This will inevitably create new challenges and opportunities for information technology enterprises, social media companies, and the businesses that use both for promotion and advertising.

<https://www.waldenu.edu/programs/business/resource/how-age-influences-social-media-preferences>

Communicating Competently with Social Media

To communicate competently with social media you must choose the best medium, be careful what you post, be considerate, balance with face time, and be safe. **Effective communicators have communication competence.** Think before you post. Software that enable people to take "screen shots" or download videos and tools that archive web pages can be used without our knowledge to create records of what you post. While it is still a good idea to go through your online content and "clean up" materials that may form unfavorable impressions, it is even a better idea to not put that information out there in the first place (Leonard, 2020).

Maintaining Positive Relationships

We all have a growing log of personal information stored on the Internet, and some of it is under our control and some of it isn't. We also have increasingly diverse social networks that require us to be cognizant of the information we make available and how we present ourselves. While we can't control all the information about ourselves online or the impressions people form, we can more competently engage with social media so that we are getting the most out of it in both personal and professional contexts (Leonard, 2020).

- I. There are guidelines for social media communication competency.

- A. Choosing the appropriate channel, face-to-face vs. social media, can make a difference in achieving successful communication.
- B. Consider mediated communication etiquette. Be careful, be considerate, and exhibit civility.

Protecting Yourself

A quick search on Google for “social media dos and don’ts” will yield around 100,000 results, which shows that there’s no shortage of advice about how to competently use social media. Know what’s out there. Since the top level of many social media sites are visible in Google search results, you should monitor how these appear to others by regularly (about once a month) doing a Google search using various iterations of your name. Putting your name in quotation marks will help target your results. Make sure you’re logged out of all your accounts and then click on the various results to see what others can see. (Leonard, 2020).

- C. Be mindful of boundaries. *Disinhibition* can lead to *flaming* and cyberbullying.
- D. Be aware of bystanders, and balance mediated communication with face time to avoid depression, loneliness, and social anxiety.
- E. To be safe, always assume that mediated messages can and may be seen and heard by unintended recipients.
- F. Cell phone conversations and text messaging combined with driving pose physical safety hazards.

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