

Future_of_Social_Media

Social media has exploded as a category of online discourse where people create content, share it, bookmark it and network at a prodigious rate. Examples include Facebook, MySpace, Digg, Twitter and JISC listservs on the academic side. Because of its ease of use, speed and reach, social media is fast changing the public discourse in society and setting trends and agendas in topics that range from the environment and politics to technology and the entertainment industry.

Two years ago, social media was the future. Now, according to research by Nielsen, social networks and blogs are the top online destination for the world's internet users, accounting for the majority of time spent online. Social media is more popular than email.

The definition of social media is built on three key elements: content, communities and Web 2.0. First, content refers to user created content which may be of very different types; it may be photos, pictures or videos, but also presence information, tags, reviews and play-lists, to mention some examples. Second, social media is based on communities and social interaction among users. Social media applications typically enable communication either directly ? which has been common on the internet since early days ? or via media objects. This was made possible during the last eight years when digital cameras and video cameras, camera phones and broadband connections became widely available. The development of digital technologies for content creation and sharing, together with web technologies and applications that let people easily participate on the internet, is the third corner stone. These technologies have usually been packed under the umbrella term web 2.0 (O'Reilly, 2005). Sometimes, this term is used to refer to the whole phenomenon of social media, but here it is used to summarise the technical aspect.

As a functional definition, social media refers to the interaction of people and also to creating, sharing, exchanging and commenting contents in virtual communities and networks. Thus, social media is literally user-driven activity, where the boundaries between producer and consumer are blurred. According to Pascu et al. (2008, p. 39), there are at least three dimensions defining the role of the users: users are suppliers of content, users support the distribution of content and service, and users have critical roles in the selection and filtering of relevant content and services.

Public relations specialists were some of the first people to embrace the power of social media, and as a result they are often the ones leading the way in the social space, whether they are consulting with clients from an agency point of view or strategizing on an in-house PR team.

In the past decade, the Internet has had a huge impact on how PR professionals function. As of late, social media is changing the face of PR, as well. We interviewed 14 PR pros on the future of public relations and how they see social media changing the industry. We collected their thoughts on how social media will affect the future of the press release, the evolution of social platforms, current limitations and solutions for those impediments, connecting with other PR pros, cost savings, and building relationships.

How the "social media specialists" see the future of social media:

"The future of social media... is that the social graph becomes so ubiquitous in everything we do that we stop using the term 'social media'. Just about everything is more interesting when you start to realize how your friends are connected to it: who's been here, who's going where, who's experienced what, who's watching / listening to / reading what. Early adopters are already taking advantage of this. For example, I open foursquare after work to see where my friends are going for drinks, or I open it at restaurants to see what my friends say to order. Foursquare's new Radar feature buzzes your phone as you walk around to call attention to things your friends find interesting. This will happen with TV ('10 of your friends are watching right now!'), and it's already happening to music with things like Spotify and Facebook. Foursquare is hustling to make it happen with all the places you encounter in the real world." - Dennis Crowley, co-founder and CEO of Foursquare

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"The future of Social Media is multi-dimensional. Each 'face' will correspond with an public/interest/career/personal area of your life and we will share or intersect that 'face' with others." - Mark Cuban, Chairman of HDNet and owner of the Dallas Mavericks

"Social media will be the main engine of discovery, giving us the ability to find the signal within the noise. As people's networks and interactions expand, massive data sets will generate predictive models that will know what you want before you look for it." - Chad Hurley, CEO of Delicious, co-founder of YouTube

Is society able to adopt new social media and its implications and how much society transforms itself along with new requirements?*Italic text*

The Institute for Prospective Technological Studies has published a survey on attitude of young people (between 15-25 years old) towards digital services. Almost 5000 respondents answered that they use social media every day in order to communicate but a wide range of them are concerned by the safety and trust issues on the web regarding private information.

Yes it is more than obvious that social media are more and more active and present in our everyday life. But how much it develops depends on the economic and social adaptation of people from western parts of Europe to adopt this kind of communication and to have the means to use it. Digital service develop rapidly so, the use of social media is not only a generational issue but a technical one also.

Nonetheless the use of social media some new key changes and challenges in the same time. The authors of 'Road mapping the societal transformation potential of social media' identified three most important loci of transformation, namely societal participation, economy and business and local environment.

First of all the authors define societal participation as the growing possibilities to participate, i.e. communicate, comment and elaborate ideas in different societal spheres spanning from interpersonal level to local community level and from there all the way to provincial, regional, national, and even international level.

Social media has become rapidly a way to express ideas, beliefs, to sell, to buy to interact and so forth. What I consider to be a real asset for our days society is the rapidness with which political parties understood that the best way to interact with people is through social media.

Social media has become an asset for participation and for democracy generally. As a result of the Internet, people can learn far more than they could before, and they can learn it much faster. If you are interested in issues that bear on public policy environmental quality, wages over time, motor vehicle safety you can find what you need to know in a matter of seconds. If you are suspicious of the mass media, and want to discuss issues with like-minded people, you can do that, transcending the limitations of geography in ways that could barely be imagined even a decade ago. And if you want to get information to a wide range of people, you can do that via email and websites; this is another sense in which the Internet is a great boon for democracy.

How much damage social media has done to economy and business? It is true that The Internet offers an unprecedented confluence of low cost production, distribution and marketing in a single publishing platform with minimal barriers to entry. At least in the USA, this distinctive political economy has seen an explosion of bottom-up, grassroots journalism and political discussion without the centralised direction, large-scale funding, and editorial control which are hallmarks of traditional news media.

Ian Ward and James Cahill from School of Political Science & International Studies, The University of Queensland published a study called Old and New Media: Blogs in the third age of political communication in which they stated that the emergence of a blogosphere which threatens to disturb, if it has not already ruptured, what Jay Blumler (2001, 204) describes as the straightforwardly top-down character of mainstream political

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communication in which issues of the day are ?mainly defined and discussed by politicians, journalists, experts and interest group leaders?. US bloggers have had an impact upon the established news media which extends well beyond driving them to publish their own j-blogs.?

The confluence of low cost production, distribution and marketing in a single publishing platform with minimal entry barriers is unprecedented but in the same time social media can provide potential new markets for firms. On the other hand information, appreciation or dislike for a product or another came from this open space which is the internet in a more rapid and cheap way. Models such as ?crowd sources? or ?work swarms? are a real asset for economy and business environment.

Third transformation field mention at the beginning is local environment. The two trajectories in social media which highlight the role of local environment are :? virtual communities are an easy way to reach people? and to spread information, and second ?locality is emphasized via the growing amount of displays in the urban and consumer environments?. The involvement of people in the community life may be a way to produce the best ideas and to raise a community through its own thoughts and necessities, activating in this way local environment through social media.

It is not a secret anymore that the most part of our lives we are spending it on internet. Whether we read, buy, speak or listen we do it on the internet. Social media has its strong points and its weaknesses, it depends on each of us how we explore it.

"Social media essentially is a category of online media where people are talking, participating, sharing, networking, and bookmarking online'." [Ron Jones].

The future of social media is about synergizing individuals? lives in harmony. It is not just about sharing, it?s about living virtually to the limit other?s people lives ?it is what I call human intelligence?s sharing. Social media will be the main engine of discovery, giving us the ability of being present everywhere without moving. As everybody will have a virtual ubiquity capability, the all world will finally explore the planet from home.

This culture in future will tend to remove the frontier between mass media and social interaction online ? they will be distinctively integrated and interconnected. For instance CNN tend to always mentions in prime time YouTube?s champions in term of views ? Try to post an event on Facebook or YouTube, if you generate 10 million ?like? or ?dislike?, for sure, you and your event will definitely be on television and vice-versa.

Social media?s profiles are becoming an extension of ourselves ? our users and profiles know more about us than we can dare to imagine. In the future, people will first meet virtually: show me your profile, and I will know who you are. The future of social media is about how well your online character knows you and knows what you need before you do.

The future of social media will shape business paradigms ? suppliers, clients, partners and employees are no longer anonymous segments with specific needs to satisfy ? they are people you can interact with, communicate, in other words a large number of permanent potential promoters ? real business builders.

The future of social media is the future of global communication available at our fingers? tips. Hence, a social media?s scoop can instantaneously turn to be a mass media tsunami having a real global impact. With the development of internet technology and smart phones, the social media is becoming more and more real ? and less virtual as it offers ?live? communication.

Social media is just a new way of communicating, which humans have been doing for quite some time. The future of social media is rooted in the past? So, what is next?

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