

Reasons for the use of Social Media & it is Differences - By Comparing with any other Media

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Abstract:

Social media has almost become part of our daily lives and being tossed around over the past few years. It is like any other media such as newspaper, radio and television but it is far more than just about sharing information and ideas. Social networking tools like Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, you tube and Blogs have facilitated creation and exchange of ideas so quickly and widely than any other media. This paper shows the concept, reasons for the use of social media, how social media is different from any other media and finally how it used by the society.

Keywords: Social media, Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, Wikipedia and YouTube

Introduction

The last decade has seen the Web evolve from a limited network used to share bits of information to a global phenomenon offering more information, resources, and social connections than ever before in history. One of the more recent evolutions in Internet history has been **social media**, basically, a Web-based mode of dialogue that uses a wide array of tools, websites, and other applications to encourage communication between individuals, corporations, non-profits, and other organizations.

Social Media

Social media is integrated technology that allows users to generate their own content and then share that content through various connections. Social media is synonymous with Web 2.0, technology that focuses on integration, collaboration, and interaction. There are numerous social media tools available, many for little or no cost.

Examples of Social Media include blogs, social networking sites, micro blogging sites, photo and Video-sharing sites, location-based networks, wikis, mashups, RSS feeds and podcasts.

Definition of Social Media

Social media is a form of electronic communication (as Web sites for social networking and micro blogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (as videos)

Types of Social Media

Social media actually encompasses many different technologies

- **Social Networks** – Services that allow you to connect with other people of similar interests and background. Usually they consist of a profile, various ways to interact with other users, ability to setup groups, etc. There are many different social networking sites. The most popular are as follows:
 - Facebook
 - Twitter
 - YouTube
 - LinkedIn
 - Google+
 - Pinterest
 - Hi5
 - Orkut
 - MySpace
 - Badoo
- **Bookmarking Sites** - Services that allow you to save organize and manage links to various websites and resources around the internet. Most allow you to “tag” your links to make them easy to search and share. The most popular are Delicious and Stumble Upon.
- **Social News** – Services that allow people to post various news items or links to outside articles and then allows its users to “vote” on the items. The voting is the core social aspect as the items that get the most votes are displayed the most prominently. The community decides which news items get seen by more people. The most popular are Digg and Reddit.
- **Media Sharing** – Services that allow you to upload and share various media such as pictures and video. Most services have additional social features such as profiles, commenting, etc. The most popular are YouTube and Flickr.
- **Micro blogging** – Services that focus on short updates that are pushed out to anyone subscribed to receive the updates. The most popular is Twitter.
- **Blog Comments and Forums** – Online forums allow members to hold conversations by posting messages. Blog comments are similar except they are attached to blogs and usually the discussion centers around the topic of the blog post. There are many popular blogs and forums.

Characteristics of Social Media

Before the term Web 2.0 was coined in 1999, Internet pages featured mostly static content such as text and graphics. Websites operated on Web 1.0 technologies, where website hosts and owners were the primary content contributors. Online information targeted a mostly passive audience that received rather than contributed content. However, with the introduction of Web 2.0 Internet technologies around the turn of the 21st century, social media venues such as blogs began to allow users to interact and collaborate with each other in virtual communities. This more open, communal method of social media dialogue contrasted significantly with the top-down approach that characterized the early years of the web.

Specifically, social media began meeting the characteristics of Web 2.0 websites, providing a rich user experience, dynamic content, scalability, openness and

collective intelligence. Active social media users could take advantage of various features that allowed them to 'like,' create and post images, and upload videos.

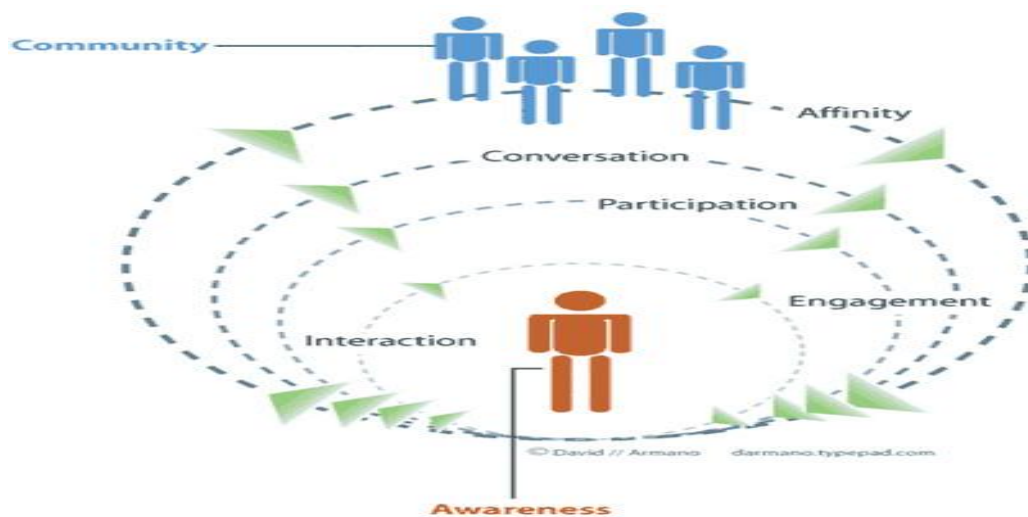
and text. Users could then share this information, either with a select group of friends or publicly across the web. However, this has also opened up social media websites.

to spamming, trolling and flaming by unscrupulous or less mature users. Nevertheless, social media has grown rapidly in the U.S. and around the world due to its blending of technology and social interaction for the co-creation of value.

Elements of the Social Media

Antony Mayfield; in its eBook, identifies five key elements of the social media:

Participation: Social media encourage contributions and feedback from everyone who is interested. It blurs the line between media and audience.



SOURCE: Social media key elements, (extract form the Purchase funnel, 2010)

Openness: Most social media services are open to feedback and participation. They encourage voting, comments and the sharing of information. There are rarely any barriers to access and make use of content – password-protected content is frowned on.

Conversation: While traditional media is broadcasted and transmitted to its audience without allowing any conversation, social media is two-way interactive street allowing users to share what they have on mind. It promotes communication between like-minded people (Yes That's What Social Media is All About!, 2010)

Community: Social media allows communities to form quickly and communicate effectively. Communities share common interests, such as a love of photography, a political issue or a favorite TV show...

Connectedness: Social media websites make use of links to other sites, resources and people (Mayfield, 2008)

Reasons for use of Social Media:

Uses and gratification theory provides a useful framework for categorizing the needs that social media satisfies.

A recent study by Whiting and Williams **interviewed a range of social media users** and explored **what keeps them coming back** to social networks.

- **Social interaction** – social media, not surprisingly, allows people to be social. They meet new people and keep in touch with friends, acquaintances and family.
- **Information seeking** – this refers to the process of finding information about products/services, keeping up to date with real-world social events, and learning new things.
- **Passing time** – social media is a great time killer and can cure boredom whether at home, at school, or in the work place.
- **Entertainment** – games, music and videos are all accessed through social media. Watching the stream of updates from people is also a form of entertainment – whether intentionally humorous or not.
- **Relaxation** – whilst people find others updates humorous, they also find them relaxing. Social media is a way to alleviate stress and escape from reality.
- **Expression of opinions** – expressing thoughts and opinions, criticizing others and blowing off steam (either anonymously or named) is regularly undertaken through social media.
- **Things to talk about** – like the daily newspaper, social media provide subject matter for people to talk and gossip about with others.
- **Convenience** – social media is readily accessible, even more so as mobile devices become ubiquitous. Furthermore, people can talk to several people at the same time.
- **Sharing information** – people can use social media to broadcast things about themselves. By publishing updates, videos and pictures, people market their own personal brand or business.
- **Knowing about others** – social media allows a window into the lives of others. By checking out other profiles, they can be nosy or ‘keep up with the Jones’.

And some other reasons influence the users to use social media are:

- Turn your passion into a business
- Take control of your life
- Take control of your publishing
- Take control of your marketing
- Become a thought leader
- Travel
- Be paid to speak
- Become influential
- Make a difference

- Leave a legacy
- Build trust
- Earn respect
- Build an online asset that will show up in Google search results for years
- Build a business online
- Create independence
- Meet cool and influential people both virtual and face to face
- Grow your own network of influence
- Open up business opportunities
- Accelerate the rate of growth both personal and business
- Become well known or even famous
- Be wanted and even demanded
- Be valued
- Connect to global markets
- Develop self respect
- Turn your life from ordinary to extraordinary
- Become an author
- Change people's lives
- Change your own life
- Grow
- Be able to leap out of bed instead of crawl
- Learn more about passion instead of just showing up
- Gain energy
- Learn more about yourself through self expression
- Leave your day job behind
- Fire your boss
- Make your mum proud
- Make your friends jealous
- Put a smile on your face
- Put a spring in your step
- Discover skills you didn't know you had
- Sing in the car or shower
- Find purpose in your life
- Overcome the fear of public speaking
- No longer have to worry about the fear of rejection

Social Media Differs From Other Media

One of the most revolutionary aspects of social media is that it delivers information free to a wide group of people with little to no lag time behind the actual event. In addition, anyone can publish news, information, or other resources, which makes anyone with access to the Internet a content creator.

Content shared via social media has the potential to reach one person or one million people, depending on its reach, message, and audience. This makes social media and the people who use it just as powerful (potentially) as the pillars of "other media";

i.e., newspapers, television, and magazines. Social media uses new technology and therefore has many aspects that differentiate it from other media outlets.

Immediacy – Where newspapers have to wait for the next publication, and television news stations have to get a reporter to the scene, social media allows news to come straight from the source in real time. This allows users to control the conversation by being the first to distribute information and by having the ability to immediately respond to inaccurate or negative information.

Interaction – Where other forms of communication tends to be one-way communication, social media facilitates conversations and interactions among users. Users are also able to decide what content they want and how they want to receive it.

Audience – By reaching out in new ways, an agency can reach audiences that have typically been difficult to reach; audiences that may need to hear these messages the most. Social media are not tools used only by youth. With worldwide users, social media channels provide agencies with a platform to reach out to larger audiences than ever.

Social Media	Other Media
Two-way conversation	One-way conversation
Open system	Closed system
Transparent	Opaque
One-on-one marketing	Mass marketing
About you	About ME
Brand and User-generated Content	Professional content
Authentic content	Polished content
FREE platform	Paid platform
Metric: Engagement	Metric: Reach/ frequency
Actors: Users/ Influencers	Actors/ Celebrities
Community decision-making	Economic decision-making
Unstructured communication	Controlled communication
Real time creation	Pre-produced/ scheduled
Bottom-up strategy	Top-down strategy
Informal language	Formal language
Active involvement	Passive involvement

Comparing Emerging Trends in Social Media with Other Media

Each time I read the newspaper or log on to my Facebook and Twitter accounts, I am bombarded by new trends or issues, whether they are about fashion, business, travel, or even art.

But out of all these observable changes in society, none is more obvious, rapid, or unpredictable than the trends in social media. Social Media continues to go beyond our expectations, challenges our current knowledge of online marketing, and sets new standards for effective networking.

If you still have to catch up on your reading about “trending topics,” these current issues will give you a good head start:

Social Television

Years ago, a major pastime was watching TV. TV time was a way to bond with your family and friends—talking to the person sitting beside you, discussing the shows you were watching, and sharing a laugh or two.

But today, the television is being “rebooted” to make way for social media. For example, the famous British show The X Factor encourages viewers to vote for the best contestant via Twitter and uses other platforms to market its contestants. Essentially, this encourages audiences to log on to their social media accounts while watching TV. Other major channels are doing the same by featuring hash tag terms beside their channel logo, inviting viewers to “Follow us on Twitter” or “Like us on Facebook” and by posting polls or updates on their YouTube channels.

Additionally, TV manufacturers are developing high-end flat-screen monitors that show dual or even triple screens featuring cable channels and Internet tabs. In a gist, you can watch TV and browse the Web at the same time.

Now a new network, Get Glue, which is similar to Foursquare except it targets media, allows users to “check-in” to their favorite TV shows and acquire stickers that show the world what programs they favor.

These examples show the rise in socially integrated TV shows, which will no doubt double in the next few years.

The Mobile Evolution

Back in the day, the most convenient form of communication was the telephone. It was fast, simple, and cheap. Today, telephones are fast becoming obsolete. Why?

Internet technology has paved the way for better, faster, and more global means of interaction. First came e-mail. Although not everybody had it initially, email was always very convenient. Then came mobile phones.

Although they have been in existence for many years now, the development of these compact and sleek gadgets heralded the total domination of small and portable communication gizmos.

After mobile phones, laptops, portable Wi-Fi routers, tablets, and Smartphone has conquered much of the world. In addition, mind you, this happened in just a matter of years, not decades.

Digital technology's rapid progression helped boost membership in early social media sites like Friendster and MySpace, though these two are presently failing to get as much buzz as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

As a result, major social media platforms have developed new ways to integrate their programs into digital technology. Most notably, applications for Android and Apple have flourished, particularly because audiences demand easier and more convenient forms of socializing.

The Game Changers

When I was a kid, I had the privilege of playing ultra-fun video games such as Galaga, Super Mario, Donkey Kong Land, and The Sims. Even just talking about them brings back wonderful memories.

But returning to the point, those were the ancestors of today's more-renowned games such as World of War craft, Halo, Mario Cart Racing, Assassin's Creed, Diablo III, and Defense of the Ancients.

Now what do all these have in common? Apart from being awesome, interactive, and challenging, these video games all have an online battle mode that allows players from all over the world to compete with each other. And let's not forget the thousands of puzzles, adventures, treasure hunts, simulations, and other kinds of games currently available, some of which are hosted at social media sites.

In fact, there are now hundreds, if not thousands, of social apps for browsers and mobile devices, virtually making it simple for users to play their favorite games alone, with friends, or with contacts from around the world even while on-the-go.

Social Sharing

Growing up, I had diaries and journals where I wrote my thoughts and insights about trivial things. Today, we have blogs, statuses, tweets, pins, videos, pictures, memes, and even podcasts that publish our opinions and ideas to the world.

This is the basic premise of social sharing.

It is not just about broadcasting useful information to an audience, but about sharing your reactions to a particular issue or your suggestions about a certain problem. Public interaction is a powerful and unstoppable force, and nobody knows this better than social media channels.

In a good way, these social media sites are exploiting our basic human need to connect with other people. They present us with a convenient way to share and access information, conversing with people who share similar interests and socializing with a broad audience.

The Marketer

“We all have a brand.”

Everyone using the Web can utter this mantra. Whether you are a personal blogger, a reviewer, an Internet junkie, a social media user, or a website owner, we all own brands that need to be marketed globally.

This is where social media giants help us. In fact, just by having an account with Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and others, our visibility on the Web increases dramatically—more so if we update regularly, interact with other members, and enhance our profiles.

Plus, this targeted way of promoting your brand makes it easier to get feedback from your audience—find out what they need, ask for recommendations, and advertise a new line of products and/or services.

Nie and Ebring (2000) reported that the Internet reduced newspaper reading. Coffey and Stipp, (1997) added that television usage among PC users is already declining and predict large reductions in TV usage. The discussion about the relationship between the traditional media and the new media has been dominated by one main aspect: computer and Internet usage will reduce the TV viewing. Moreover, this fear keeps growing as the Internet audience is constantly increasing together with the use of **social media**.

Conclusion

Billions of people around the world use social media to share information and make connections. On a personal level, social media allows you to communicate with friends and family, learn new things, develop your interests, and be entertained. For Example, on a professional level, you can use social media to broaden your knowledge in a particular field and build your professional network by connecting with other professionals in your industry. At the company level, social media allows you to have a conversation with your audience, gain customer feedback, and elevate your brand.

The internet and social media provide people with a range of benefits, and opportunities to empower themselves in a variety of ways. People can maintain social connections and support networks that otherwise would not be possible, and can access more information than ever before with any other media. The communities and social interactions people form online can be invaluable for bolstering and developing people’s self-confidence and social skills.

Communicating via social networking channels makes up an astonishing amount of the time we spend online. Many sources report that there are over 40 million "tweets" sent on Twitter every single day. Socialnomics reports that Facebook actually gets more daily traffic than Google, the worlds largest and most popular search engine. According to Nielsen Ratings, "total minutes spent on social networking sites has increased 83 percent year-over-year", and "social networking now accounts for 22% of all time spent online in the US". Obviously, social media is no longer a trend, and is growing more popular every single day.

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