

## *New & Emerging Media*

### **Overview**

Throughout the last decade or so, the world has changed rapidly. With the digital age in full force, new technological advances are helping recreate the way we communicate and consume media. Perhaps the largest contributor to this change has been social media. Each day it seems as though a new social media platform exceeds its counterparts always changing our information culture. Social media has gone from being an outlet of expression/communication to an instantaneous source of news, global communication, and business tool; social media has even begun to drive political campaigns. In his article for *Mashable.com*, Soren Gordhamer states that social media is now the primary source of consuming news. "Furthermore, by getting our news from social media, we know who is recommending it, and can easily communicate with that person about it," Gordhamer writes. "News is more social than ever."

Social media started to gain growth back when MySpace and American Online messenger, but the birth of Facebook fueled a change. Nowadays companies such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and LinkedIn seem to pave the way for fellow social media networks. According to a report for 2013 from Hootsuite, Facebook is home to 1.2 billion active users, 225 million for Twitter, 260 million for LinkedIn, 150 million for Instagram, and only a mere 36 million for the slowly declining MySpace (LePage). Overall, this report found that approximately one-fourth of the world's population (1.73 billion) are social media users. This active user population is a catalyst for the change social media is bringing about in the world.

The internet was a place to publish information and share it to the world. Social media started off as a means of sharing personal details. Since then, according to Jason Rosenthal in his article for Forbes, social media has become more about making real connections for personal use or business use. Rosenthal writes that “the social world is now about building authentic conversations and amplifying messages from passionate supporters and influencers, which drive the positive activity being sought by each community” (Rosenthal). He continues to discuss that the internet isn’t just about how the numbers anymore (whether that’s pageviews, subscribers, followers, etc.), but rather about substance. The internet also started off as a global field available for everyone. While that remains true today, there is now more importance on niche groups.

## **Theory**

This constant change has led to an overlap between old and new media. In his book *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, Henry Jenkins labels this interaction of old and new media “media convergence.” Jenkins states that “[i]n the world of media convergence, every important story gets told, every brand gets sold, and every consumer gets courted across multiple media platforms.” This theory of convergence is beginning to become more evident with the increase of social media. Jenkins believes that convergence is more than just a shift in media (Jenkins 15). He continues with the idea that “[c]onvergence alters the relationship between existing technologies, industries, markets, genres, and audiences. Convergence alters the logic by which media industries operate and by which media consumers process news and entertainment” (Jenkins 15-16). Not only are consumers just consuming media, but they now have the tools to become producers of content. The interactivity of these networks are overtaking traditional sources of media. Cell phones are just cell phones

anymore, Twitter feeds are starting to appear on news broadcasts, amateur videos are helping create television programs, and online portfolios are replacing the résumé.

With regards to the future, it's hard to visualize or conceptualize the possibilities of media convergence. Wearable technology appears to be the next big thing, so there is a chance that this will contribute to convergence (Stinson). Hashtags on social media have become prominent and they will most likely continue to be around in the future. Perhaps hashtags or even social media platforms themselves will begin to seamlessly blend together to create one common network (Melberg). As news continues to increase via social media, it is possible that they will become the leading source of news, overtaking traditional television broadcasts. It will be interesting to see if this idea of convergence will instead transition into a sense of predominance of new media over old media.

Not only are the media in which we receive information changing but also the processes we go about interpreting this new information. In his essay, George Siemens discusses the new theory of connectivism and how it is changing the way we learn. He states that the now large influence of technology has affected the learning process. Siemens writes, "Including technology and connection making as learning activities begins to move learning theories into a digital age" (Siemens 3). There is now an importance in forming connections with specialized communities and information. According to Siemens, some of the characteristics of connectivism are the idea that "[l]earning is a process of connecting specialized nodes or information sources," maintaining connections is key in order to continue learning, and the ability to recognize the differences in these fields is key (4). Technology is constantly changing and specializing these fields of knowledge, thus causing us to have to adjust the way we learn. Social media and social networks do well at connecting people in these specialized fields and is now an important tool to "foster and maintain knowledge flow" (4).

In the future, I can see schools starting to implement social media usage in its curriculum. We may see the increase of social media platform abilities in regards to research and academics. As Siemens writes, "Our ability to learn what we need for tomorrow is more important than what we know today" (Siemens 5). New and emerging media are helping this process of learning. Perhaps we might not be necessarily smarter in this digital age, but we have better abilities and access to what is needed to *become* smarter.

## **Issues**

One major issue regarding the implementation of new and emerging media has been the decline of traditional journalism. The rising popularity of social media and this idea of consumers as producers has created a shift towards a change in journalism. This modern shift of journalism can be labeled as citizen journalism. PBS segment Mediashift host Mark Glaser explains that "[t]he idea behind citizen journalism is that people without professional journalism training can use the tools of modern technology and the global distribution of the Internet to create, augment or fact-check media on their own or in collaboration with others" (Glaser). There are, however, many people that believe this change in traditional journalism is not the best thing for the public (Allan and Thorsen 12). Glaser explains that some professional journalists believe only trained journalists are fit for the job. I can see why they believe this, as many citizen journalists are just average citizens with new technology. I would have to disagree with this opinion, however. New devices and technology are helping citizen journalists unveil news to all parts of the world that might have not been available beforehand. Chris Measures writes in his article for Social Media Today that while actual journalists can be banned from some areas of the world, "citizen journalists with camera phones can be our sole source of first hand information" (Measures).

They also allow for the public to receive different sides to stories. Many times large news companies will only publish one opinion or side of a story. Basically, citizen journalism prevents the monopolization of news. Perhaps the biggest impact of citizen journalism was exemplified during the Arab Spring. These political protests in the Middle East were fueled by social media and citizen journalism. In an interview with *The Guardian*, *Al-Jazeera* head of social media Riyaad Minty says that “our main stories are driven by images captured by citizens on the street, it's no longer just a supporting image. In most cases citizens capture the breaking news moments first. The Arab Spring was really the tipping point when it all came together” (Batty). Conflicts such as the Arab Spring give citizen journalism a chance to prove itself.

Another positive aspect of citizen journalism is that it can basically be considered crowdsourcing of the news. Crowdsourcing has proven to be effective in other areas such as developing new technologies, products, or commercials, so why can't this be used for journalism? CenturyLink writer Gary Sloper explains that “[t]his [crowdsourcing] method of seeking resources from the masses is part of a larger trend — one that enterprises are adopting to drive innovation and boost business” (Sloper). I predict this issue most likely won't even be considered an issue in the future because citizen journalism will continue to grow and simultaneously redefine traditional journalism. When used responsibly and correctly, citizen journalism can become a powerful tool in the future.

Another issue with the rise of new media has become social media dependency. Social media has many benefits but we are starting to see the negative side effects it has on society today. Child psychologist Dr. Karrie Lager tells Huffington Post that “excessive internet use can have serious negative consequences” (Stein). Later in this article, Dr. Adi Jaffe goes on to compare social media usage to drug addictions. Jaffe claims that “[t]he immediacy and reward associated with social media (especially through mobile avenues) can be thought of as a 'quick

hit' and would be expected to result in a minority of users experiencing 'addiction-like' symptoms" (Stein). The severity of this situation should not be taken lightly if doctors are starting to diagnose this social media addiction.

Some may say that the benefits outweigh the negatives of social media, but this psychological problem with it, to me, is a big problem. I've noticed myself sometimes constantly refreshing my Twitter feed or checking Facebook at unreasonable rates. Lager says that internet usage is a good thing and has its applications, but it "becomes a problem when they use it excessively as a way to disconnect from their feelings and escape their problems" (Stein). It's clear that social media addiction is a prevalent issue, but there still is question to whether it's actually a mental health issue or not.

The theory of convergence may also contribute to this addiction, as we are now receiving information via all types of media: old and new. This information overload is already causing problems for some people, and convergence will intensify this (Dean and Webb).

I have a feeling that this issue will be a *major* issue in the near future. Recent news of UK teenager Danny Bowman failed suicide attempt after becoming addicted to taking "selfies" has the professional health world worried (Aldridge and Harden). At first glance, something like this may seem fictional, but the truth behind this is frightening. I think that we will soon see more of these types of cases, especially since wearable technology is on its way (Stinson). I believe that these "wearables" will only help contribute to this social media addiction. I predict that in the future there will be specific treatment and treatment centers available for social media addiction.

### *An Emerging Media on the Horizon: Twitter*

Some might claim that Twitter might have already achieved high social media status, but I think that there is so much more in store for this form of media. Since its birth in 2006, Twitter has grown to include over 240 million monthly active users (Edwards). Not only are everyday people on Twitter, but more and more businesses are beginning to use this social media platform. According to the third annual Burson-Marsteller Global Social Media Check-Up, 82% of Fortune's top 100 companies were active on Twitter, with an average of 10.1 Twitter accounts (S. Bennett). Such powerful numbers show how important Twitter can be for a company, and is a reason many smaller companies are beginning to heavily invest in social media. In her article for *Mashable.com*, Stephanie Buck explains that businesses should take advantage of Twitter and its hashtags. She writes that companies should "be investing in hashtags as part of [their] social media strategies" (Buck). More specific hashtags can help a company target a specific audience. Because hashtags basically began through Twitter and still represent Twitter, this is why I believe Twitter will grow in popularity.

Another reason why I think Twitter will only continue to grow relates to the convergence theory. This idea that old and new media are coming together and integrating can be found with Twitter usage (Jenkins). Almost every news channel now has a live Twitter feed scrolling somewhere on the screen. According to blogger Ashley Bennett, most television viewers are now watching TV while using other devices (A. Bennett). She describes this multitasking and interaction between program and audience as the "second screen" phenomena. I have seen numerous television programs use Twitter to have followers tweet in questions for someone on the show. Even news companies' online sites feature this Twitter integration, such as the New York Times. Tweets can be embedded in other websites and integrated into different media.

Twitter has helped other forms of media become more engaging, and as Bennett writes, “[Twitter] has become more interactive, and many of the media choices that people make are based on the information that they get from their friends online.”

The simplicity and effortlessness behind Twitter is a reason why it has become so popular. Take for instance, the hashtag: it has gone from a simple classification tool on Twitter to a universal symbol and icon, appearing in every other social media. As Rebecca Murtagh writes in her article for *Search Engine Watch*, “[p]eople search every day on Pinterest, Twitter, Google+, Instagram, YouTube, and other social platforms using words and hashtags with success” (Murtagh). It’s possible that this universalization will occur with all social media platforms in the future, but at the moment Twitter appears to be leading. The simplicity behind Twitter also allows for companies to use it in different and creative ways. One way has been the transformation of traditional print news to digital news. Twitter allows someone on one side of the world to instantaneously access breaking news on the other side of the world. News outlets are starting to push their online presence more and more due to this reason.

With regards to connectivism, Twitter is now a powerful tool that allows people to receive instantaneous information. The hashtag feature of Twitter allows users to search for specialized information and place themselves into these specific areas of knowledge as explained by Siemens. Its continual growth and ability to connect people of all areas, as well as give people the power to gain knowledge and information, are reasons why connectivism can be applied to Twitter.

## *My Future*

### **Professional World**

Based on what I have learned from class and researched on my own, I believe that I would be able to help develop a new media plan for an organization. Some fundamentals of new and emerging media that an organization should be aware of is the fact that nowadays just being on social media isn't enough for a business. They must be active and engage with their audience. Another basic concept for an organization is that they need to specify their target audience. Lastly, an organization needs to focus on providing fresh content. If that means just focusing on one platform of social media then that should be done in order ensure quality over quantity.

Some questions I would ask the organization is what their target audience is going to be. Before developing any plan, the organization should find out who they are reaching out to in order to successfully reach the right crowd with the right message. I would also ask about the resources/budget available. Many social media platforms are free to use, but additional funding could help increase advertising and reach. Finally, I would ask them what their specific goals are with this plan. Obviously increasing brand awareness is part of any company's overall goal, but I would check with the organization to see if they are trying to promote a certain product, service, or current deal, etc.

Although I have a solid knowledge base regarding social media, there are still some platforms that I am not experienced with. Along with these, I have minimal experience in analytics and search optimization tactics. I would like to look into analytics a bit more to see how a new media plan is coming along. While I have been blogging for a while now, I have yet to blog for a business, which is different than a personal blog.

In the future, I can see myself working as a social media marketer for a company. I already have a good amount of experience with various platforms of social media and enjoy marketing. I can see new and emerging media being the foundation of my future profession. With an interest in graphic design, I could even see myself working in an advertising-type position.

## **Overview**

Like I said before, I came into this class with previous experience with blogging and social media, but have been able to gain more knowledge from this class. I feel as though I have improved my writing skills and am now more aware of the actual impact of new media. It is incredible how widespread it is if you just take a step back and actually look around. Many of us now just take these things for granted as we have grown up with the internet our whole lives. It is incredible how widespread this social media use has become. Everywhere you look you can find someone on their phone (I guarantee almost 90% of the time they are on a social media app). I also think that I am more conscious about what I post online knowing that it is basically available to everyone. Some of the readings and stories we covered in class helped show the importance of your online presence and how you carry yourself on social media.

With regards to my personal life, I can begin to see the increasing importance of social media. People are beginning to communicate more with social media as well as digest information faster than ever. I could see some company like Facebook trying to create their own smartphone in the new future. I don't really see any of my social interactions with friends differently now after class readings and projects, but I do see the increasing presence of business social media accounts. They are starting to change the traditional structure of advertising and are adapting to each new form of media. I think that this is only the beginning of new media, as there is still so much potential for the applications of these new platforms. Who

knows, maybe in the future students will be writing this paper on Facebook in an online classroom and chat room instead of even having a physical presence.

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