

SOCIAL MEDIA

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Abstract

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1. Introduction

Social media, created with Web 2.0 technology, is a means of personal and public communication through the use of various networking software and websites. However there have been disagreements over the scope and meaning of the term social media (Power and Phillips-Wren, 2011). Every researcher seemingly has their own definition of social media, which varies as different and newer technologies become available.

Before the evolution of social media post the Internet 2.0, as we all know it, the roots of social media go much deeper to almost 18th century Victorian era. An 1849 publication of ‘Anecdotes of The Telegraph’ reported an incident of a marriage ceremony being conducted of a bride in Boston and the groom in New York via telegraph. Well before the advent of Facebook, 19th century newspapers used to run snippets in newspapers of briefly-glanced strangers and tried to connect them. In 1961, DC Comics used to post names and address of people (who wished to be identified) whose letters were published. Comic book enthusiasts could connect with each other this way and a network of connections emerged via comic books. This gave rise to popular comic book conventions. In 1960’s and 1970’s hackers known as “phone phreaks” used to hack telephone networks and initially used to make long distance calls for free. However, it later evolved into a chat-room style conference call network, where these phone phreaks connected people over phone calls for a live group interaction.

These are some of the instances of the origins of social media before the advent of Internet 2.0, which explains the desire for communication and collaboration (Whitehouse, 2012). Post evolution of Internet 2.0, the definitions of social media changed drastically. Kaplan and Haenlein's definition of social media fits best in post Internet 2.0 era. They define social media as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content,” (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010), and which can be divided into six different categories:

1. Collaborative projects
2. Blogs and micro-blogs
3. Content communities
4. Social networking sites
5. Virtual game worlds
6. Virtual social worlds

On other hand Mangold and Faulds (Mangold and Faulds, 2009) described social media more broadly. According to them, social media can encompass every software program or website with which a person shares ideas, thoughts, pictures, audio, music, video and other content. They have subcategorized social media into 15 different categories, which includes the following (Mangold and Faulds, 2009):

1. Social Networking Sites (e.g. MySpace, Facebook, Faceparty)
2. Creative works sharing sites:
 - Video sharing sites (YouTube)
 - Photo sharing sites (Flickr)
 - Music sharing sites (Jamendo)
 - Content sharing combined with assistance (Piczo)
 - General intellectual property sharing sites (Creative Commons)
3. User-sponsored blogs (Cnet.com)
4. Company sponsored websites/blogs (Apple Weblog)
5. Company-sponsored cause/help sites (click2quit.com)
6. Invitation-only social networks (ASmallWorld.net)
7. Business networking sites (LinkedIn)
8. Collaborative websites (Wikipedia)
9. Virtual Worlds (Second Life)
10. Commerce Communities (eBay, Amazon, Craigslist, iStockphoto)

11. Podcasts
12. News delivery sites (Current TV)
13. Educational material sharing (MIT Open Course Ware, TED)
14. Open Source Software communities (Linux, Mozilla)
15. Social bookmarking sites allowing users to recommend online news stories, music, videos etc. (Digg, Reddit)

Kaplan and Haenli describe social media in a very concise and direct manner, which appeals to people well versed with technology. On the other hand Mangold and Faulds' definition of social media is very broad and helps the uninitiated understand the internet-centric definition of social media. (A.Naik, 2015)

2. Advantages

Managing customer relationships

Social media has revolutionized the way companies connect with their consumers. Companies are active on existing social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter where they regularly monitor and post content related to new products or updates on existing products, engaging customers with various offers and promotions.

Innovation

Organizations use social media for innovation by obtaining new ideas and modifying existing products and services.

2.1. Operations within organizations

Operations are another key aspect in which social media can bring about significant change in an organization. Simply by connecting employees to each other in the most efficient manner, valuable information can flow into and within the organization.

2.2. Leadership

Social media has the potential to change leadership in two distinct areas: strategic insight and execution. Executives can analyze the successes or failures of new products by obtaining feedback from Facebook and Twitter feeds.

3. Disadvantages

3.1. Unwillingness to share information by employees

Information sharing is very crucial in organizations for decision-making. However while having the right information can give individual employees a competitive edge, sharing that valuable information with others over social media can erode that advantage.

3.2. Information overload

The second challenge in using social media for decision-making is having too many options. Over the last few years social media technology has grown so much that there is an abundance of information, but it is scattered across multiple applications.

3.3. Loss of Productivity

Almost 63% of US office workers use social media like Facebook or Twitter for personal reasons at least once a day and almost 82% use it a few times per week. Almost 71% of 18-29 year old UK office workers access social media multiple times over a week for personal usage (ClearSwift, 2007). As these statistics show, organizations should be very concerned about the employees spending excessive work time on these social media resulting in poor productivity.

3.4. Damage to an organization's reputation

Another major concern for organizations is the potential damage to reputation caused by insensitive and derogatory comments and posts made by employees.

3.5. Unpredictability of users on social media

Social media provides users with the power of invisibility. Employees and consumers can post content and remarks about organizations without revealing their true identity.

3.6. Loss of Confidential Information

Another major disadvantage of using social media in organizations is the potential loss of confidential information.

3.7. Virus and Malware Threats

Unintentional or malicious intent by employees can not only cause the organization loss of confidential information, but can also expose the organization to various viruses and malware.

4. Challenges

4.1. Lack of management understanding, support and push.

Given that social media is still a relatively new concept for organizations, managers are very cautious in their approach towards it.

4.2. Time required in information sharing.

Keeping up with several social media sites and constantly updating information on them can be very time consuming. Employees have limited time to update/share their expertise on social media sites, even though they are aware that sharing and documenting their expertise can ultimately prove beneficial for their organization.

4.3. Language barriers

One of the challenges in adopting social media is a potential language barrier. Since most of the information online is in English, it is difficult for non-English speaking employees around the world to access this information (Bertot, Jaeger, Munson, & Glaisyer, 2010), and contribute their opinion via social media sites.

4.4. Risk, security and loss of control in using social media

In adopting social media for organizations there is some fear that an employee can irresponsibly post confidential information, which may be detrimental to the image or success of the company.

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