

Chapter 26

Social Media and Perception Management

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ABSTRACT

This is a perception operation. This statement is very usual on written and social media nowadays. The structural features of the social media instruments and their being open to interactions differing from the traditional communication instruments enable social media to be easily canalized, provoked and diverted from the objectives. In this context, perception management strategies have a significant share in the use of information with the purpose of misleading the target mass by manipulating it for the sake of certain interests. With this aspect, perception management process confronts us as a power struggle taking place on knowledge and information. What is this perception management? What is the relationship with social media? This article written to manage or inspire your perception about social media and perception management tried to find answers to these questions.

ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

We are in a period that the information and communication technology is advancing day by day. This advancement increased the alternatives of the limited sources of the past in the communication field. Before the current use of Web 2.0 technologies, in order an event happened anywhere in the world to resound, it used to have to appear on written and visual media. However, in the present day when the social media environments and instruments are the dominant ways of communication people have their own communication instruments. Also, they determine their own agenda. A topic which is not on the front burner of the traditional media can be a “Trend Topic” on Twitter, be read and commented by the millions. In social media environments, which is post modern, people do not need to read newspapers, sit besides the television or the radio to reach the news anymore. Social media made the communication versatile and faster by removing time limits and space borders.

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The basic need of communication can be used to direct human behaviors. While the link between “source-message-channel-receiver” is vital in communication processes, they can be formed according to the objectives of the source. Source is the person who starts the communication process for his own purposes. He can manage the receiver’s perceptions in order the receiver to give expected reactions.

Social Media

Technology is improving at a dizzying speed in the globalizing world, so the people are to accelerate in order to keep pace with this technology and not to remain behind the time. Modern people stay away from stable, non-sharing, and perhaps the most importantly slow technologies and look for novel products one of which is social media. It is a dynamic environment without a shortage of time where the information share and monitoring are at the highest level, the ideas are clearly stated and debated. As a term, social media represents the whole of the instruments, service and applications which provide the users with interaction by network technologies (Boyd, 2008). Individuals’ conversations and sharings on the internet compose social media. Internet users have the opportunity of reaching search content by means of internet sites and applications supplying content and information transmission such as social networks, blogs, microblogs, instant messaging programs, chat sites and forums. At first, it seems as a dialogue between individuals or small groups, however, the number of the concerned people with the transmitted information or the content increases fast and high in number (Kurumsalhaberler, n.d.).

The content in social media applications is completely determined by the individuals and they interact with each other through these applications constantly. In brief, it is a way of communication, without time and space limits, based on sharing, interaction and discussion (Kaplan & Michael, 2010).

To Lerman (2007) social media sites have four common features:

1. Users can generate a content in different media categories or contribute to the content.
2. Users can tag the content.
3. Users can evaluate the content by active polling or passive use.
4. Users can create social media networks defining common interests with the other users as individuals and friends.

Social media is growing rapidly and becoming an indispensable part of every organization. Radio reached 50 million listeners in 38 years and it took television 13 years to reach 50 million audiences. While the internet gained 50 million users in four years, Facebook had 50 million members only in one and a half year. Facebook, founded for Harvard students in 2004, is one of the examples of the social networks which has become a phenomenon. Reaching 100 million members in 2009, the site has become a world hosting 500 million users at the end of 2010 (Mohan, 2011).

Social media, technology and telecommunications have a structure which provides social communication through words, images and audio files. They also have a framework for people to share their stories and experiences in this context. All the web-based services that allow individuals to create half-open profiles in a designated system, to give the list of the other users in connection clearly; and allow those other users to see the listed links and explore in between are called social networks. Thanks to these networks, people obtained an opportunity to make friends from all over the world. Those friends may be the unfamiliar or fake identities. The groups in social networks are open to manipulations by the groups called “Soft Power “

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