


Chapter 26

Patterns of Deceptive Communication of Social and Religious Issues in Social Media: Representation of Social Issues in Social Media

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ABSTRACT

Deception and religion have evolved over the years. Deception and belief manipulation are aspects of religious communication. The digital space revolves around fake news and indicates that humans are more susceptible than ever to mental manipulation by powerful technological tools. This chapter demonstrates patterns in deceptive narrative usage in a communication of social and religious issues (CSRI) in social media among a religious community in Mumbai. Drawing from deception theory of David Ettingery and Philippe Jehiel, the exploitation by rational players of the fundamental attribution of error (FAE) made by other players, where FAE allows for belief manipulation. The authors propose that an increased presence of social media promotes patterns in CSRI in social media. The analysis depicted patterns in the preference to the use of text visual images, audio-visual, and audio formats when communicating social and religious issues.

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INTRODUCTION

The digital world is growing in all dimensions of communication. Deception in digital space has encouraged evolving stakeholders to find new methods and digital platforms for enticing and promoting ideologies of different communities. Communities belonging to various religious communities over the world do use social media network to be connected with each other to meet their religious and social needs. Religion and digital space has evolved over the years of human existence. The digital space is now an answer to several social, religious issues and representation in the physical world. Social media provides this digital space and facilitates representation. Unlike other traditional mass communication platforms in the digital space, social media is interactive and participatory in nature. It aims to educate, inform and entertain masses. As a mediated communication technology (MCT) application, social media platforms play a vital role in its augmentation of design and patterns. 'No man is an Island' (Donne, 1570). This study focuses on deceptive communication patterns in mediated communication, using social media for religious and social issue representation. Over the years deception and belief manipulation are key aspects of many strategic interactions, including religious communication. It is when the needs for communication are not met with solutions to the problems in the society, human beings look for divine intervention. In this process of looking towards divine interventions, for solutions to the problems, human being tries to communicate with other human beings, in a prescribed manner, through various existing religious groups and communities. It is this process of exchange of information on religious and social-issue related information and its exchange using social media platforms that is being addressed in this short research study. Religious practices involve a certain specific set of communication patterns, argues Howarth Caroline, (2011). She argues that social representation is 'a system of common values, ideas and practices that enable people to understand each other and communicate about similar issues. It also involves a degree of subjective interpretation that leads to differences in understanding, different readings of texts and therefore the motivation to communicate. Representations may be hegemonic, negotiated or oppositional'. Bride well and Isaac define a model of dynamic belief attribution for deception in their research [Bride well and Isaac, 2011]. Jones models self-deception using epistemic logic in [Jones, 2015]. This study explores and demonstrates the patterns in the representation of social and religious issues in social media, among a religious group of Syrian Catholic Diocese of Kalyan-Mumbai (SCDKM) parish church community in Mumbai. The members of this group are active on 'WhatsApp' a social media platform and are constantly in touch with other fellow members of the group, for representation of their social and religious needs. In fact, according to Moscovici and Mrkova (2000, p.274) 'We cannot communicate unless we share certain representations'. This representation of identity, culture and diversity is communicated and gets reflected in social media. The need of the study is spurt in the usage of social media platforms in the world for deceiving representation of social and religious issues.

Deceptive Social Media Usage and Socio-Religious Issues

Deception is all around us. The digital space is also deceiving. Socio-religious practices have an audio visual representation in social media. It was opined that the 'technology degrades religious practices when it breaks communal bonds' (Alex Verschoor-Kirss, 2012). This is because the definitions of religion vary in their emphasis on belief, faith, or the supernatural nature of religion, although what they nearly all have in common is a focus on the communal aspect of religious practice. Some of the community aspects of religious practices are enticing to its members and non-members. Digital deception in

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