

Social Media Communication and the Influence in Relationships

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Abstract

The social media use individuals have and how it can change relational status is studied in this paper. The method by which this research was conducted was by interviewing individuals and surveying individuals through social media. The individuals that were studied in the interviews and surveys ranged from ages 19-29. A finding was that participants are very open to having their family connected to their social media. With family being connected to their social media they have a strong loyalty to what the family beliefs are by the posting that is made on social media.

Review of Literature

Social media is becoming a corresponding resource in today's society in the improvement with communication. The connections that individuals get through social media improve their daily life for establishing relationships. These relationships can either be good or bad based on what is preserved through the interpersonal communication established on social media. Relationships through social media can be established by not just personal communication with individuals, but also with political figures and even companies or groups. Yang et al. (2014) found that different genders used unrelated platforms of communication on the basis of the individual and situation. Social media is used on how a group or individual will market themselves out to the others on the web and how they will influence you into their idea. In a recent study of how individuals engaged in a brand it was found that millennial used multiple platforms of communication (Agozzino 2012). This study by Agozzino also established that social media was becoming a more diverse platform to communicate online with individuals and groups.

Group Branding

College students and society are now relying on what they see on web and what is shown on television to influence them to buy or use a product. With millennials heavily on mass media checking their Facebook status, reading their tweets, and other platform use they are aware what is on their social media platforms. In 2012, Agozzino studied how brands are able to establish committed relationships through social media. With the study that Agozzino held, it was shown that brand awareness and brand messaging happened through these committed relationships. Brand awareness and brand messaging can be a pro or con for a company it comes down to how that individual perceived the product and how it is projected through social media.

The brand messaging is not relied all on the individual and how it perceives a product, but how the product is marketed through social media. The average attention span for college students (young adults) is eight seconds. Within these eight seconds the consumers (individuals) must be able to notice a product quickly. For example: companies are getting images to appeal to the natural eye when they advertise on social networking sites (Men & Tsai, 2013). When groups are able to gain the appeal of their advertisements they are establishing a relationship with the individual that was aware on social media and goal is to influence the groups to buy the product. This concept of establishing a relationship was supported with the engagement through brand on social media in Agozzino (2012), Men and Tsai (2013) research. Men and Tsai (2013) are able to come up with a methodology that through public engagement and community identification on group social media sites an organization-public relationship is established.

Political Image

Group branding does not need to be based on the group or even company but it can be established by a political figure. Political figures can help determine what party you wish to vote

for and even help with their clothing with brand messaging. Political figures are watched as a hawk on social media because one mess up and their career could be over. These political figures are such that of group branding they wish to brand themselves to other to increase their chance of getting elected or even reelected in America. Sung Woo and Gil de Zúñiga (2014) found that individuals engage in political issues on social media. Woo and Zúñiga noticed that the engagement happened if individuals can relate to a current political issue or even see a lot on social media of that political. A great example to Woo and Zúñiga result is that of gay marriage; when the supreme court announced gay marriage was legal it went viral on every social media platform.

Researchers (Yang, Brown, & Braun, 2014) found that individuals engage more on social media with one another when it comes to important issues during election cycles. This engagement was due to the rise of social media for society. As stated earlier millennials rely heavily on mass media communication, so during the elections the millennials gather their opinions based on what is on social media. Political figures will try in multiple ways to influence you into voting for them through visuals that will appeal to your eyes on social media. Once the political figures win you over their plan is to build a relationship with you; and hopefully get you to share their information. Even though this is not direct communication the political figures have established a relationship with you on social media. Through establishing relationships in the communication with groups and political figures the outcome is a trust in what is offered through social media.

Social media can also be used to hurt relationship and communication in society. Through the study of different development levels of relationship it was noticed that individuals slowly started to message each other through the use of social media (Yang, Brown, & Braun,

2014). The relationship can be destroyed at the first set of interaction on social media based on context. This context can come off to strong when its plan was to appeal to the user. If the relationship is destroyed on social media there is no longer loyalty. Yang et al. (2014) found that meeting somebody on social media cannot happen if the relationship is destroyed from the start. College students meet individuals online first before they engage in face-to-face communication. When the relationship is destroyed these interactions no longer exist and the relationship and communication is no more. Based on what I have read and researched I propose the following research questions:

RQ: How do people negotiate social media use in relationships?

H1: Negative responses from peers via social media will result in diminished relational status

Method

A survey consisting of twenty questions was administrated to ten random individuals of various ages. The survey contained questions relating to vulnerability: how much the participants are okay with how they are posting on social media, openness: participants were being asked how open they are to their friends on social media, control: were the participants able to manage the usage of social media, and lastly connections: how connected were individuals to other people on social media. The dependent variable of the survey was the social media use the participants used and their relationship status was the independent. The participants were asked to rate statements/questions using the Likert Scale describing if their social media use in everyday life.

The recruitment was done on my personal social media accounts. Due to the restrictions of Survey Monkey the survey was broke up into two parts consisting of ten questions each to make a total of the twenty questions. The surveys took an average of 5 minutes via online to finish both of the surveys.

I surveyed two males and eight females. The average age of a participant was 22 years old.

The design of the interview protocol was based upon how the participant used social media in their every day life from leisure, to work, and even for pleasure. Interviewees were also asked if social media positively affected their relationships and also if social media negatively affected their relationships. Also, the interviewees were asked how do their peers perceive what they share and post on social media also along with a time their social media use had consequences. The interviews were then given a chance to answer a question on what they see on social media that can destroy relationships, along with giving their own insight of anything they wanted to add about social media.

I was able to find two female individuals that use social media in their daily life. The female's ages were twenty-two and twenty-six years of age. The twenty-two year old female had a lot to talk about when it came to social medi. The length of the interview lasted 30 minutes. The twenty-six year old didn't quite understand how the questions were related to social media. I began both interviews with the question, "how do you use social media" and then let the individuals answer the question and begin the interview. The twenty-two year old female was nervous to give me to much information during the interview. Both females have a job that requires social media.

Findings

Participants of the survey consisted strongly with female's relations on social media ($M=1.8$, $SD = 0.42$), but two males were surveyed and one respondent of an age older than the rest of the survey data skewed some of the information that is provided. The male participant of the survey was not concerned with the harsh words that individuals made on his post compared to the females and the younger male individuals who were all vulnerable to what words were used on post ($M=4.10$, $SD = 1.20$). Both male and females were okay with being tagged on individual posts ($M=4.2$, $SD= 0.63$), which in relation to the hypothesis is rejecting the hypothesis. The individuals are all okay with being tag and the hypothesis states that negative responses diminish relational status.

A contradicting question to the survey resulted in the rejection of the hypothesis because the individuals stated that their control on social media were taking post into consideration with thinking of what was posted ($M = 1.90$, $SD=0.99$). This result showed that the ten participants all agreed in the same area of control. The next question following the control of thinking what is posted was if the participants were okay with being tagged on post. Majority of the participants were very opened to being tagged on post ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 0.63$). Their openness to being tagged on post rejected the hypothesis because the individuals are okay with being tagged which they do not face a diminished relational status.

My finding shows that the participants are fine with being connected to other groups in their relation to family. The findings through my survey did not support my hypotheses just reject or not relate to my hypothesis. I thought that questions that were categorized as vulnerability, control and openness were related to each other. These relations would have the

same response to each other but their responses contradict one another. The findings showed that the participants all responded the same way when it came to openness to social media.

In my interviews, the twenty-two year old uses social media more for professional use along with at time personally using social media. The twenty-six year old uses social media more for personal use and at times professionally. She uses it to communicate with friends throughout the day. When both females were asked on how social media positively affected their relationships their responses were different. The twenty- two year old was positively affected by the use of social media because she got the job she currently has, because of her following on social media. On the contrary the twenty- six year old felt it only helps her staying into the loop. Both females agreed that social media use helps with the break down of barrier before the interaction in person. The twenty two year old got her job because of the amount of followers that she has. This also also has negatively affected her relationships because she gets unwanted attention and has gotten stalkers on social media. Her response showed support for the research question because people used social media to her in a stalking affection.

Both females had opposite answers on how social media can destroy relationships. The twenty- six year old stated that “posting to much information” along with “ not sharing enough information” would destroy relationships. The twenty- two year old wanted to “keep a healthy balance” of social media use and personal life along with how many people are in tune with the social media world and not their personal life. Both females had times where their social media use had consequences on what was posted. The twenty- two year old stated that when she was applying for her job she posted an unbiased personal post because she related to that individual and the company told her that it couldn’t happen again. Which the twenty- two year old then added on how that post was a slap on the hand and a warning to be careful what to post and

provide factual information. The other female had made a post about an award she was getting but it wasn't official yet and her job told her to remove her post. Both of their experiences showed how their relationship with their employer was effected because of what was posted on social media.

Discussion

Researching on how individuals use social media and if it can impact a relationship is an important topic in this era. For example, the majority of participants agreed on wanting to have their family connected to their social media use ($M= 4.00$, $SD= 1.05$). This supports the hypothesis because if individuals do not connect with their family on social media, then they will not be able to get their families honest feedback. Getting families feedback will help improve the relational status with each other in the family. This information is crucial because if a family strongly is against a political figure or company and you see their post on social media you will come to believe that information is true without further research.

My research tested the hypothesis by asking individuals through quantitative survey if responses from peers diminished their relational status with that peer. Contrary to my hypothesis, the individuals were not okay with having people control on how they made a post on social media. They felt that when they made post it was thought through and approved.

My research question was also answered through my interview because the two individuals used social media in various ways of living. For example, questions that pertained to the relationship of peers they both agreed that they were lighthearted on their responses to their peers. During one of the interviews a response that helped support my research question was "it is called social networking for a reason" this is important because social media uses has to be

balancing in relationships and not consume the life of others. The age relationship of the two females relates to the quantitative survey that was given out and the data was not skewed. Being able to see how individuals change their use of social media in the work place and keep an importance of their own balance life is important because social media is becoming a usage 24/7 in the era we are in now.

Conclusion

The benefit of my findings from a research perspective is how individuals do not face a fear of negative responses when it comes to social media. Individuals take responses in different ways but the way it is acted upon will affect you. It is important of how individuals face negative responses on social media because people can take what negative responses control their life

One limitation of my research was that I surveyed and interviewed majority of females along with just focusing solely on social media. Having my survey available just online limits to the individuals that might focus on their every day life along with their social media life. Also just getting majority responses from females I am not able to get the responses from males Getting the input of males is important because I would be able to see they face relational issues due to social media.

When taking the survey online, the participants would spend a total of five minutes on the survey, which is not enough time for them to thinking about the question. The survey time indicates they their responses were fast and easy, a way to improve that is to have more questions that they are able to think about. Providing more questions also helps with the idea that I would be able to get more understanding of my hypothesis.

Lastly, the survey was just responded to individuals that were friends of mine, which skewed the data. The twenty-two year old that I interviewed was the only connection I didn't have as a friend so her answers were independent. Having my friends take the surveys it is perceived that they do it to help me and not fully understand what I am asking them in the questions.

In depth research concerning male views of social media relational status would improve this understanding of the topic. This research in the end focused on female and not a lot of input was that of male's ideology. Having a more specific study would find that social media can effect relational status or it cannot effect that relational status.

Reference

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Appendices

H1: Negative responses from peers via social media will result in diminished relational status

We are collecting data based on your social media use you do today. Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary, and you may skip any question or stop at any time.

Please provide the following information:

1. Age: _____

2. Relationship Status: _____

3. Biological sex: _____

4. Social media platforms you use (check all that apply):

____ Twitter

____ Facebook

____ LinkedIn

____ Youtube

____ Pinterest

____ Instagram

____ Google +

____ Other: _____

Directions: The following items are composed of statements concerning your feelings and perceptions when involved in social media. Please indicate in the space provided the degree to which each statement represents your feelings.

5. I take into consideration when people use harsh words on my post

Strongly agree Agree NeutralDisagree Strongly Disagree

6. When I am with someone I do not use social media.

Strongly agree Agree NeutralDisagree Strongly Disagree

7. I am okay with my family being on my social media.

Strongly agree Agree NeutralDisagree Strongly Disagree

8. I am okay with tagging individuals on my post

Strongly agree Agree NeutralDisagree Strongly Disagree

9. I have allowed other people access to my social media.

Strongly agree Agree NeutralDisagree Strongly Disagree

10. I am okay with negative comments on my social media.

Strongly agree Agree NeutralDisagree Strongly Disagree

11. I post on social media at times without thinking

Strongly agree Agree NeutralDisagree Strongly Disagree

12. I am okay with people tagging me on social media post.

Strongly agree Agree NeutralDisagree Strongly Disagree

13. When my family has feedback about my social media I take that into consideration

Strongly agree Agree NeutralDisagree Strongly Disagree

14. I am okay with being added to social media groups

Strongly agree Agree NeutralDisagree Strongly Disagree

15. I take into consideration if words are spelled wrong on my social media

Strongly agree Agree NeutralDisagree Strongly Disagree

16. I pay attention to what I post on social media.

Strongly agree Agree NeutralDisagree Strongly Disagree

17. I am okay with going two days without using social media

Strongly agree Agree NeutralDisagree Strongly Disagree

18. I am okay when people approach me with their feedback on social media.

Strongly agree Agree NeutralDisagree Strongly Disagree

19. I am okay with managing social media accounts of groups

Strongly agree Agree NeutralDisagree Strongly Disagree

20. I am very open on what I post through social media.

Strongly agree Agree NeutralDisagree Strongly Disagree

Thank you for your participation.

RQ1: How do people negotiate social media use in relationships?

I am interviewing you based on your social media use you do today. This interview is completely voluntary, and you may skip any question or stop at any time during this interview.

Please provide the following information:

Biological sex:

What is your current age?

What are the social media platforms you use the most

1. How do you use social media?
2. How if at all has it positively affected your relationships?

3. How can it build relationships
4. How if at all has it negatively affected your relationships?
5. How can it destroy relationships?
6. How if at all do you perceive your peers impact on how you share/ post on social media?
7. Tell me about a time where your social media use had consequences.
8. What if anything have you seen on social media that can destroy relationships?
9. What would you like to add about social media?