

EMERALDHANDBOOKS

THE EMERALD HANDBOOK OF COMPUTER-MEDIATED COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA

EDITED BY
JEREMY HARRIS **LIPSCULTZ**
KAREN **FREBERG**
REGINA **LUTTRELL**



**The Emerald Handbook of
Computer-Mediated Communication
and Social Media**

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Part 1
Emerging Media Trends in Theory and
Research

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Chapter 1

Introduction: Connecting CMC and Social Media Research

Jeremy Harris Lipschultz, Karen Freberg and Regina Luttrell

Introduction

Most disciplines, such as public relations (PR), marketing, and advertising, have an established handbook that assembles distinguished researchers in the profession to contribute based on their level of expertise and presence. However, when it comes to social media and computer-mediated communication (CMC), there is not a handbook that collectively gathers research in these emerging areas from a global and transdisciplinary perspective. Until now.

The Emerald Handbook of Computer-Mediated Communication and Social Media brings together global scholars in the academy to contribute their expertise and insights to address developing theoretical and practical applications. Each chapter features research and theoretical conceptualization of key concepts, areas of specializations, and future directions in CMC and social media. In addition, chapters have a feature dedicated to gathering industry insights from each of the areas of specialization, highlighting the bridge between academia and industry within the CMC and social media spaces.

The authors have divided the book into three parts. We ensure that the content begins with theory and methods, which sets the foundation for the text, and then moves into the applicability of strategy, tactics, and measurement. The final focus is toward the future of CMC and social media and its impact on the study and practice of communication.

- *Part 1: Emerging Media Trends in Theory and Research*
- *Part 2: Social Media and CMC Applied Trends*
- *Part 3: New Communication Technologies, Directions in Theory and Practice*

With knowledge and experience in research, writing, and publishing, our handbook editors have developed the most comprehensive emerging media handbook in the field. This collective volume from established and well-known researchers from universities throughout the United States and Europe features

important practitioner and industry research, leading to actionable insights. Chapters critically examine topics ranging from social media theories, human computer interaction (HCI), virtual communities, computer-mediated communication pedagogies, personal influence, and branding to new technologies within social media.

There has not been a more powerful and disruptive force in the study or the profession of communication than social media. The internet, social networking, social media, and digital transformation have dramatically changed the way that we communicate and conduct business over the last two decades. *The Emerald Handbook of Computer-Mediated Communication and Social Media* unequivocally articulates the intimate connection between theories presented in communication and the impact of social media on theoretical and applied trends in emerging media. Drawing on a range of theoretical and empirical perspectives, this comprehensive volume examines the multiple transformations and various implications social media and the environment—including the global pandemic, social justice protests, and an important US presidential election—have impacted the study of communication.

The Social Context of a Global Pandemic

The origins for this handbook were important conversations about the intersection of CMC and social media research during the early days of a global Covid-19 coronavirus pandemic in 2020. In Chapter 2, Carolyn Lin and David Atkin explore selected theoretical factors that explain the impact of social media uses and effects among different social groups, alongside the larger society, at individual and system levels. In particular, they discuss and synthesize several theories and models—including social capital theory, social support constructs, the uses and gratifications perspective, and the integrated technology adoption model—from the traditions of political science, social psychology, mass communication, and the diffusion of innovation. The present synthesis can help guide the development of new theory—while extending extant perspectives—to help advance our understanding of the relationships between social media and society.

Nicky Chang Bi and Ruonan Zhang in Chapter 3 review the origin of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) within social marketing theory and practice. Research data show how social elements of social media affect individuals' product decisions and behaviors. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok are reviewed as eWOM channels for their effectiveness. The researchers interviewed a YouTube eWOM creator and explored the strategies YouTubers use to grow their channels, the motivations of eWOM production, their community building, and credibility enhancement. The case study is valuable in understanding the eWOM industry from a creator's perspective, whereas many studies in the past focused on the audience and consumers. The chapter also incorporates parasocial relationships (PSR) to explain individuals' decision-making process. In addition, the chapter illustrates Instagram's recent strategies of eWOM and how it monetizes the impact of creators. YouTubers earn

revenue through Google AdSense based on followers and video views. Finally, a critique on the current eWOM industry focuses on how the purchase ease increases unhealthy, impulsive buying behavior and materialism.

In Chapter 4 Miriam Brinberg, Rachel Reymann Vanderbilt, and Denise Haunani Solomon focus on CMC and the important role in the initiation, development, and maintenance of interpersonal relationships, particularly romantic relationships. Research often relies on self-report measures of CMC behaviors; however, the frequent, fast-moving, and fragmented use of smartphones and their applications render self-reports of their use subject to error. Mobile data donation offers an alternative to capture smartphone communication in situ. In this chapter, the authors describe insights gained from mobile data donation of text message logs from 41 new romantic couples, which resulted in more than one million text messages exchanged over 6,452 days of interaction during their first year of dating. Results showed moderate correspondence between couples' self-reported CMC behaviors and their actual CMC behaviors and, thus, highlighted the precision gained by obtaining unobtrusive logs of these behaviors. They also describe insights gained from examining text logs using interpersonal conflict as a case study, specifically the actual use (or not) of CMC affordances and longitudinal phenomena in couples' conflict interactions. The researchers conclude with a discussion of future directions and opportunities provided by unobtrusive observational approaches, with respect to both theoretical and applied advances in the study of CMC in interpersonal relationships.

Thomas J. Johnson, Ryan Wallace, and Taeyoung Lee in Chapter 5 focused on Covid-19. The Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) warned on February 15, 2020 that the world was facing another disaster, one as dangerous as the ongoing coronavirus: an infodemic, which is an overload of misinformation, disinformation, and conspiracy theories that threatened the success of global responses to the pandemic. This chapter reviews the literature on misinformation, disinformation, and conspiracy theories and examines the social media role in disseminating health crisis information. In particular, this chapter examines factors that explain inaccurate and conspiracy information about the virus on social media feeds. The researchers also discuss ways both news media and social media platforms can effectively battle against misinformation, disinformation, and conspiracy theories.

In Chapter 6 Deepti Ganapathy's pandemic research centers on Twitter and the Government of India (GoI). The chapter explored the use of Twitter in predicting Covid cases to understand: What was the impact of adoption of Twitter on the country's crisis? What topics or themes associated with Twitter communication were used by official government communication channels? In January 2020, the first case was reported in India, through an air passenger from the Middle Eastern region. Slowly, the carriers of the virus started arriving through airplanes from different countries such as Italy, Dubai, and the United States. The virus spread rapidly, resulting in a complete lockdown that closed business sectors – financial, banking, information technology, manufacturing, as well as educational institutes. The GoI declared the pandemic as a “notified disaster” under the Disaster Management Act. We examine how the use of social

media – particularly Twitter was used to inform, monitor, and collect information from citizens about Covid-19.

In Chapter 7, T. Phillip Madison, Kyun David Kim, and William R. Davie focused on the term “infodemic” that describes a communication environment where false, misleading, or spurious accounts are accepted as credible. In 2020, world health officials found themselves battling two viruses – one biological and the other informational – both fueling the progress of the health menace. This chapter analyzes the infodemic through the theory of social identity and its relationship to confirmation bias and algorithmic gatekeeping. It explains how this communication phenomenon moved online users through a subtle radicalization process.

Mediated Communication in Life and Death

Jensen Moore in Chapter 8 applies CMC to death communication within social networking sites (SNS). What was once private and personal communication now has been brought into our daily viewing via Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, etc. This chapter examines social media mourning (SMM) and highlights the ways mourners use SNS to memorialize, share stories, and move forward. CMC technologies help social media mourners transcend distance, time, and even mortality by keeping their loved one “alive” through continuing bonds, memorials, and digital interactions. However, SMM is not without its issues as mourners face parasocial grief, grief appropriation, disenfranchisement, prolonged grief, and grief trolls.

In Chapter 9, Zoe Hurley’s research focuses on Arab women in the Middle East who are prolific social media users, and an increasing number are micro-celebrities, or influencers, generating digital incomes. For example, Dubai-based Huda Kattan, known as @Hudabeauty with 47.9 million Instagram followers, or @model_roz from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with 12.4 million. But in some Arab contexts, the female face is still considered strictly private and Qatari influencer @koodiz, with 362k followers, is typical of Arab women who avoid showing their face online. Alternatively, @koodiz’s Instagram posts include metonymic substitutions, whereby consumer items become symbols for self. Yet, theories of non-Western emerging self-presentations/representations are nascent. In view of the gap, this study takes Arab women influencers as a case to illustrate a range of self-(re)presentations on Instagram, the image and video sharing platform. A corpus of 10,497 images and critical conversations with Arab women influencers enable feminist transnational visual inquiry. Analysis zooms in on Arab women influencers’ visual subjectification and practices of “saving face” via nonfacial snapshots, cinematic intertextuality, synthetic embodiment, and metonymic substitutions. Findings reveal examples of the “veiled-gaze” and “veiled affordances” enabling Arab women influencers’ visibilities below the radar of censorship while refracting the hyper-surveillance of visual economies.

In Chapter 10, Brianna L. Lane and David J. Roaché provided an overview of online dating research and trends, and directions for the future study of online

dating. The first section is an overview of what we know about online dating. First, they briefly cover the history and development of online dating followed by a discussion of self-presentation. Then, the researchers include a review of deception in online dating, from minor discrepancies in self-presentation to major deception (i.e., catfishing). Following deception is a discussion of digital affordances; that is, ways in which the design of the website or app influences users' experiences, and modality switching – moving the relationship from online to offline. The second section of the chapter focuses on a theoretical debate within online dating research. One of the main arguments among CMC scholars and interpersonal scholars is the use of theory when studying online dating. This section of the chapter presents this argument and offers suggestions for the future study of online dating.

In Chapter 11, Kyle Webster studies asexuality as an underresearched topic in media, gender, and sexualities studies. Previous research has explored definitional questions of asexuality, interviews, and surveys of asexual people, and consideration of asexuality's place within queer and feminist communities. However, research has not yet fully explored the issue of asexuality invisibility in the media, which currently amounts to symbolic annihilation. While representation of asexuality is nearly nonexistent in mainstream and traditional media, digital spaces have been the location of visibility and self-expression for asexuals. In examining how queer representation of asexuality is seen and made visible online, this textual analysis study examined the content created by 10 asexuality-focused subdivisions ("subreddits") of the social media site Reddit. This study found that asexual subreddits serve as areas of community, pride, and discussion on the concept of asexuality for asexual individuals, while they serve as resources and locations of support for those in the early stages of questioning or understanding their own asexuality. These efforts fight symbolic annihilation of asexuality to these groups of people, though whether these sites combat larger invisibilities is unclear.

In Chapter 12, Olga Solovyeva, and Alexander V. Laskin focuses on key developments in contemporary dating via CMC through the user experience perspective. Building upon the affordance theory, it provides empirically supported conceptualization of modern online dating practices, specifically focusing on Gamification, Tinder-effect, and Tinder-fatigue. As dating media evolved from the profile matching via punch cards at Operation Match to LBRT (location-based real time) dating applications and their search algorithms, society changed, too. The society accepted new CMC dating with open arms including: dramatic increase in dating media usage and a positive shift toward it in public opinion. Yet, as mediated and especially mobile dating grew, it changed dating as a concept itself. The chapter concludes that the intermediary technology may become a relationship in itself substituting the relationship the users were looking for in the first place, thus, leading users to treat dating as a video game, and experience the Tinder-effect and Tinder-fatigue.

Diversity and Social Media Communication

Teresa Puente in Chapter 13 studied the hashtag #MoreLatinosInNews as a call for more Latino representation in the media and by mass media. The hashtag was launched by the National Association of Hispanic Journalists as a call to action in 2016. Between February 1, 2016 and October 1, 2020, there were more than 56,000 tweets by journalists and media influencers that have used this hashtag. This chapter asks the question: How does a hashtag provide an unfiltered voice for Latino journalists in the news? The dataset of tweets was analyzed using a mixed methods approach, a content analysis in which data are interpreted both qualitatively and quantitatively. Keywords were searched in the dataset including, politics, presidential debate, immigration, Hurricane Maria, Puerto Rico, careers, mentoring, and congratulations.

In Chapter 14, Yousef Aldaihani and Jae-Hwa Shin examined the agenda-setting theory in the era of social media. Many scholars argued for the minimal effect of the traditional media with the plethora of other media choices, especially social media. This new media environment has facilitated the emergence of innovative ways for citizens to consume news and information. On Twitter, citizen journalists have been providing news, by being both subjective and objective as they combine facts with opinions, in a conversation-like style to the public. Unlike professional journalism, in which news is committed to established organizational principles and guidelines, alternative news is most concerned with what is newsworthy to pass on. This chapter discusses the potential effect of professional and citizen journalism on social media, particularly Twitter. It examines the influence of media salience constructs; attention, prominence, and valence on public-perceived salience. The chapter also examines an innovative method of measuring media and public salience amidst the developing new communication environment.

In Chapter 15, Shugofa Dastgeer and Rashmi Thapaliya's multimethod study explored the QAnon social networks from August 2020 to the end of January 2021 on Twitter, which was the last six months of Donald Trump's presidency. A total of 3237 unique tweets, retweets, and replies were analyzed using framing and social network analysis. The study used conspiracy and homophily theories as the theoretical frameworks. The finding showed that density scores were very low for all six networks (August, September, October, November, December, and January), meaning there was a low level of interconnectivity among the users in those networks. In addition to QAnon itself, the networks focused mostly on Trump, GOP, and White nationalism. Other topics of discussions included Biden, media, liberals, and extremism. Another finding was that an overwhelming majority of the tweets (80%) were not positive toward anybody and that 70% of the tweets were negative toward QAnon, Trump, and QAnon and Trump.

In Chapter 16, Frauke Hachtmann studied one of the fastest growing industries in the world: the sports sector touches billions of people every day, including athletes, sports organizations, media rights holders, fans, and the general public. Facilitated by new and emerging media technologies, sports content is no longer limited to covering live sporting events, but also includes behind-the-scenes,