

Social Media Presence and Its Impact on Relational Communication

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Introduction

Considering the fact that communication and interpersonal relationships are interconnected the term relational communication suggests that the communication derives from the interaction of the different members of the society (Rogers, 2008). In the 21st century when the society gains the sense of connectedness through social media presence the attitudes and perceptions in terms of connection between the communication peculiarities influenced by virtual communication becomes more actual.



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While Baby Boomers and Generation X are especially worried about the usage of different gadgets by younger generations delivering attention to the outcomes is important.

Mankind nowadays lives in the Information Era and Gen Z is the product of it, they have never lived without technology, which means that virtual communication is as part of their life as face-to-face. They are used to “high-tech and multiple information resources, with messages bombarding them from all sides” (Williams & Page, 2011).

According to different researches Gen Z cares about the belonging, their ideas and experience are wider. “Their self-concept is partially determined by the group to which the Tween belongs” (Williams & Page, 2011). They are bolder ones and believe that they can change the world.

Digital Era

Significance of digital era is crucial in the contemporary world. In today’s world, virtually every individual in technologically advanced societies experiences the pervasive presence of digital technologies, subtly impacting diverse facets of our daily routines. Frequently, these technologies have emerged with the aim of enhancing convenience and efficiency in our lives. The widespread and rapid adoption of social networking platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn and TikTok has guided new possibilities, that caused and created a revolution in communication in our lives. In accordance with Kaplan et al. in the current era, social media plays a central role for many business executives (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The book entitled “How the World changed Social Media” describes so-called “digital natives” and the world’s transformation due to social media swift growth (Miller, et al., 2016).

“As of October 2023, there were 5.3 billion internet users worldwide, which amounted to 65.7 percent of the global population. Of this total, 4.95 billion, or 61.4

percent of the world's population, were social media users" (Ani Petrosyan, 2023). In 2022, the typical daily social media consumption for global internet users averaged 151 minutes, marking an increase from the preceding year's 147 minutes.

The term "social media presence" denotes the extent to which user or brand is represented across various social media platforms. It goes beyond mere visibility and encompasses how the user or company presents itself and shapes its image through the social media channels. Organizations are integrating social media into their strategies for marketing, advertising, employee recruitment, and comprehensive communication with employees, clients, and partners. Positive Social media dialogue is essential tool for both organizations and individual users.

According to Karampela et al. findings, the supplier's active engagement on Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook contributes positively to all four indicators (commitment, intimacy, satisfaction, and partner quality) of brand relationship strength (Karampela, Lacka, & McLean, 2020). Enhanced interactivity is associated with an improved perception of partner quality, and responsiveness plays a crucial role in fostering commitment.

The youth as active users of social media are sociable ones and appreciate communication. Despite the thing that they feel more courageous in virtual space they prefer fact-to-face communication. The negative side of social media presence is that it increases aggression, there are number of people "following" someone they do not know. More than that, due to the continuous updates of different social platforms you do not even always need to "follow" someone to be part of his/her life. Probability of meeting the content on the platforms not acceptable or interesting for some representatives of the society might annoy them and express aggression towards others.

Relational Communication in a Long Live Digital Era

Due to the profound significance of relationships in individuals' lives, scholars have invested considerable time and energy to unraveling the origins and mechanisms of interpersonal relationships. In the dynamics of relationships, communication stands as the foundational process that molds and defines the connections between individuals. "Communication creates and sustains relationships and, as well, that relationships shape both the enactment and interpretation of communication" (Sillars & Vangelisti, 2018).

Relational Communication Theory defines communication as a social phenomenon, representing the vital essence of our humanity. It serves as the mechanism through which we engage with others, collaboratively construct social realities, and shape both relationships and our individual identities (Rogers, 2008).

As mentioned before, in the current era dominated by digital advancements, our daily existence is profoundly influenced by the pervasive presence of digital technologies. Correspondingly, the landscape of communication has been transformed with the rise of social media, creating a distinct wave in connectivity. Social media platforms provide free space for sharing and gaining information, they enhance the immediacy of communication and provide forums for public perspectives on a range of issues. (Wright & Hinson, 2009, p. 27)

The rise of social media has fundamentally altered the dynamics of human connection, communication, and relationship maintenance. Although these platforms provide unparalleled chances for staying linked, they also bring forth a nuanced spectrum of impacts on personal relationships, encompassing both favorable and adverse aspects.

People employ social media platforms within a variety of relationships. Friends share images and video clips, consumers engage with both each other and representatives from organizations offering products and services, and research collaborators, coordinate and carry out projects. Meanwhile, family members utilize these platforms to disseminate news about achievements and significant life events. In

every instance, individuals harness the fundamental capabilities of social media systems to facilitate communication, exchange information, and share digital content, all in support of their respective relationships.

“Social media are a diverse collection of technologies and applications that allow individuals to communicate, exchange information, and share digital artifacts with one another. These basic capabilities can be appropriated to support many different types of relationships. Whether creating substitute relationships, enabling new types of relationships, or complementing existing relationships, social media systems are important influences on the way people and organizations relate to one another in all spheres of life” (Butler, *The International Encyclopaedia of Digital Communication and Society*, 2015).

Despite several negative aspects, social media can't be considered negative, since thanks to its presence in our lives we can delete distances in many cases. Not only in terms of personal communications, but in business context as well social media and virtual communication have very important role – it makes communication easier, saves time, fosters more courage, etc.

Social Media Impact on Relation Communication

The way people communicate has been reshaped by social media, leading to a decline in the occurrence of face-to-face connections. Face-to-face communications transformed into long drawn written communications. Nowadays, computer-mediated communication (CMC) has surpassed face-to-face interactions in both significance and convenience (Venter, 2019). The advantages provided by this form of social media include immediate global connectivity and convenient accessibility. As communication speeds up, the world appears to contract, making instant contact across the globe easily achievable. The ability to facilitate the creation of new connections that transcend geographical, political, and social divides stands as a key incentive for the transformative influence of social media on both organizations and society (Butler & Matook, 2015).

As mentioned previously social media has opportunity to spread a big amount of information in very short period, that bombards the users in many cases during the time they are not ready to receive and digest it accordingly. This causes difficulties in communication, since some people lose perception of reality. Besides, privacy is lost when everyone know everything about others, this may cause some mental problems (Subramanian, 2017).

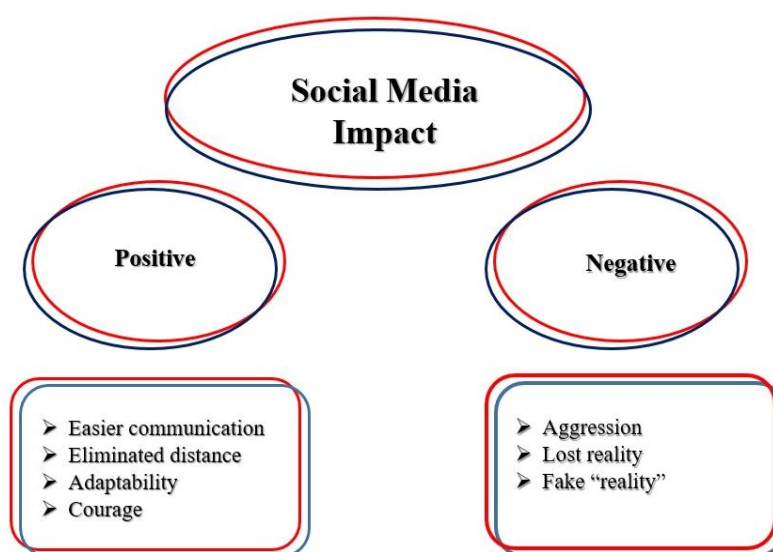


Figure 1. Social media impact on human interaction

The research conducted on the Georgian market showed that despite feeling comfortable in virtual space Gen Z still prefers face-to-face communication exactly for the same reason mentioned above. They consider that social media hinders from understanding the reality, moreover, in many cases information spread there is fake.

Conclusion

As social media and virtual communication gains more popularity and penetrates in different aspects of human lives new challenges also arise. Communication on social media necessitates varied skills and techniques of communication unlike face-to-face communication (Kazaishvili & Khmiadashvili, 2022). Technology and mobile communication is very actively used by the society, especially by youth to develop relationships in different contexts (Pettegrew & Day, 2015).

Gen Z as very active and hard-to-imagine-without-technology generation still chooses face-to-face communication even though virtual space gives them more courage and confidence. Although social media makes communication easier, it still causes multiple misunderstandings and misleading, thus might have damaging affect as well. Different angles of virtual communication in terms of influence on relational communication were identified:

1. Social media/virtual communication simplifies the communication process
2. Virtual communication changes communication language
3. Virtual communication develops better communication skills for face-to-face communication.

Accordingly, despite several negative aspects positive impact is obvious to improve relational communication.

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