

IMPACT OF SOCIAL NETWORKS AND SOCIAL MEDIA ON COMMUNICATION

IOSIM IASMINA^{*1}, SUBA ANKA¹, BABCSANY CRISTINA¹

Banat University of Agricultural Science and Veterinary Medicine

“King Michael I of Romania” from Timisoara, Faculty of Management and Rural Tourism, Timisoara, Romania

*Corresponding author's e-mail: iasminaiosim@yahoo.com

Abstract: *Over time, both social networks and social media have had various degrees of impact on communication, no matter the type – intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, organisational, public, or mass. Using the analytical method, this paper clarifies the terminology specific to the field, introduces new types of approaches, approach in the analysis of the impact of social networks on communication, counteracts well-established views on the different types of communication, and details different levels of impact such as the number of communicators, the formal/informal character, the private/public character, and the face-to-face/mediated character of each type of communication. Analysis shows that intrapersonal communication, interpersonal communication and organisational communication are more impacted by social networks and social media than group communication, public communication, or mass communication.*

Key words: *social networks, social media, communication*

INTRODUCTION

With a few exceptions (see the works of Runcan in **References**), there is no systematic, in-depth analysis of the impact of social networks and social media on communication in Romanian research in the field. Therefore, new research continuing previous research in the field of communication (see Iosim and Băneș in **References**) is needed to:

- Clarify the concepts used (e.g. the eight ambient stimuli distinguishing between social media and non-digital contexts) given that the paper also addresses Romanian readers that are not familiar with English terminology in the field;
- Introduce new types of approach (e.g. situational) in the analysis of the impact of social networks on communication);
- Counteract well-established views on the different types of communication (e.g. *there cannot be any intrapersonal communication within social networks, social networks alter the essence of organisational communication*);
- Draw conclusions on the effect social networks can have on the different types of communication.

Before approaching the topic, a few **terminological clarifications** are needed:

- A **social network** is defined as a community of people sharing a common interest and communicating information/resources over a website using ICTs [6]. Twenty-six years ago, [10] emphasised the role of global networks, saying that they have an impact on our way of communicating, learning, working, etc.
- **Social media** are defined as websites (digital platforms) or other ICTs used by people to communicate over blogs or fora to share information, etc. [4, 6, 14].
- **Communication** is defined as a process in which people exchange feelings, ideas, information, ideas, etc. [4] while **communications** are defined as e-mail, mail, newspapers, radio, telephone, television, etc. used by people to share information [4].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

To clarify concepts, to introduce new types of approach, to counteract well-established views on the different types of communication, and to draw conclusions on the effect social networks can have on the different types of communication, the **analytical method** was chosen as **research method**. The process to perform the analysis consisted in analysing the impact of social networks and social media on the different features of *intrapersonal communication*, *interpersonal communication*, *group communication*, *organisational communication*, *public communication*, and *mass communication*. Thus, the number of communicators, the formal/informal character, the private/public character, and the face-to-face/mediated character of each of these types of communication were analysed. Analysis results were then used to draw conclusions on the effect social networks can have on the different types of communication.

The **material** used consists in *books, articles, BA, Master and PhD theses on the language advertising in the promotion of tourism*, materials published all over the world in the last two decades and made available to the wide public via the Internet [2, 12].

RESEARCH RESULTS

Social media can be studied from various perspectives: communications, computer science, economical, educational, information technology, law, marketing, organizational, political, psychological, show business, sociological, etc. [9, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34]. A variety of cultural, economic, political, social and technical factors influence the role and impact of mobile social media [11]. Whenever a new medium arrives on the communication stage, it affects the society's communication patterns. Thus, pigeon-courier was replaced by telegram, telegram by radio, radio by television, and television by the Internet – and all of them have an impact on the different communication levels – intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, public, and mass. **Social media** are distinguished from non-digital context by eight ambient stimuli [14]:

- *accessibility* (being at hand when needed – [30]): social media contexts can be more open and accessible than non-digital contexts and even digital communication media, for instance;
- *anonymity* (being unknown or unacknowledged – [30]): digital media can allow anonymity for some platforms, such as when one creates a fake username using a free e-mail domain (e.g., Google, Yahoo), but not others, such as text messaging (that is tied to a phone number);
- *interdependence* (dependence between two or more groups, people, things, etc. – [30]): social media allow greater interdependence than digital communication media, which in turn are greater than nondigital interactions;
- *latency* (being latent – [30]): content presented in social media contexts occurs with shorter latency than content presented in non-digital contexts;
- *permanence/permanency* (being permanent – [30]): what is posted in the digital context, whether by social media or older digital technologies, may live indefinitely;
- *physicality* (being physical – [30]): the constraints put in place by physical stimuli (geography, location, physical structures, temperature, weather) in nondigital contexts are scarcely relevant in social media contexts, and for digital communication contexts as well;
- *synchronicity/synchronism* (being synchronous/simultaneous – [30]): social media contexts more greatly enable, and support, either synchronous or asynchronous interaction;

- *verifiability* (being capable of being confirmed, substantiated, verified – [30]): information can be verified in nondigital contexts (e.g., printed media), but not for all content (e.g., word of mouth); in contrast, content presented in social media contexts can be verified quickly, and there is often no ambiguity about what was posted.

The impact of social networks on communication should take into account the different types of communication seen from a situational perspective (Table 1).

Table 1.

Types of communication according to situational approach [after 7]

Type of communication	Number of communicators	Formal / Informal	Private / Public	Face-to-face / Mediated
Intrapersonal	1	Informal	Private	N/A
Interpersonal	2	Informal	Private	Face-to-face
Group	3-12	Semi-informal	Semi-private	Either
Organizational	12+	Formal	Public	Either
Public	Many	Formal	Public	Either
Mass	Many	Formal	Public	Mediated

1. Intrapersonal Communication

Intrapersonal communication, or **communication within the individual**, is communication that takes place within the individual *when he/she is communicating with others*, or *when he/she is alone and thinking to himself/herself* [7].

Intrapersonal communication occurs when we analyse, when we conceptualize (when we transpose a theory into concepts/notions), when we contemplate, when we do introspection (when we analyse our own mental life), when we dream with our eyes open, when we formulate thoughts or ideas, when we remember something, when we talk to ourselves, when we think, etc. It is specific to philosophers, thinkers and writers.

Though **there cannot be any intrapersonal communication within social networks**, the problem with social networks is that social media have become an important tool of self-expression and self-presentation and that whatever seems important to us (intrapersonal communication) we are communicating to other people (interpersonal communication) via Facebook, for instance, informing others about a birthday party, dinner, marriage ceremony, outing, shopping or travel (through real, created or edited photos of ourselves and/or of surroundings) [1].

Social networks do not affect the formal/informal character of intrapersonal communication, but they facilitate the passage from intrapersonal communication to interpersonal, group, public, and even mass communication, increasing the number of communicators and making intrapersonal communication lose its “privacy” feature.

2. Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal communication is *communicating between persons* [7].

As far as the impact on human **face-to-face communication** is concerned, [3] found that the quality and quantity of interactions in other media are not threatened by social Internet sites because online social interaction is only part of the total multimedia social relationship, not an entity in itself. Local social relationships are most likely to use face-to-face contacts and least likely to use the Internet. Long distance relationships are maintained with the Internet about as often as with the telephone. Internet interactions were perceived as high in quality and only slightly lower than face-to-face conversations and telephone calls. Moreover, [8] found out that people are more conflictual, non-conformist and uninhibited when using e-mail [...].”

Social networks do not affect the number of communicators or the informal and private character of interpersonal communication, but they can cause interpersonal communication lose its non-mediated feature.

3. Group Communication

Group communication designates *verbal/nonverbal messages that group members exchange* [7]: for a group to exist, it is necessary that its members control the group members; create different identities for the group members; have expectations from the group members; influence the group members; share a goal; [7]. Thus, group members determine goals, do things that keep the group intact, maintain the group identity, motivate participation, participate.

According to [8], this makes groups more conflictual and polarized, yet their access to information is more available, their access to new people is increased, their decisions are better, their opinions are more diverse, their participation is more active, their spatial, status and temporal barriers are weakened.

Communication technologies have drawbacks: in asynchronous forms of communication, information may be lost, messages may be ambiguous, and it may take more time to achieve goals. Likewise, communicating through discussion fora, e-mail, text messaging, threads, etc. may prevent immediate feedback

Social networks do not alter the essence of group communication.

4. Organisational Communication

Organisational communication is a *process through which people construct, interpret and manage verbal/nonverbal behaviours/symbols intentionally/unintentionally, through mediated/direct interaction in particular organizational contexts* [7].

Social media represent a context that differs largely from traditional (e.g., face-to-face) and other digital (e.g., e-mail) ways of interacting and communicating, and that may affect the affect, behaviour and cognition of individuals within organizations. However, when [5] analysed the role of Facebook in the promotion of academic library services and events, they found out that some librarians were content about Facebook, while the majority considered it had nothing to do with professional librarianship.

In exchange, the role of Facebook, for instance, in the moulding of the young generation is beyond doubt [21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27].

Though social networks do not alter the essence of organisational communication, they have brought about new organisational communication roles such as:

- *boundary / cosmopolite monitor* of the environment and *bringer* of new information into the organization;
- *bridge / mediator* of the interaction with outside individuals;
- *clique* communicating more with each other than with other members;
- *gatekeeper / filter* of upward / downward communication;
- *grapevine and rumour network* communicating through informal / social networks about important topics;
- *liaison* (one who mediates interaction between two groups).

5. Public Communication

Public communication designates *individuals and groups engaging in dialogue in the public sphere aiming at delivering a message to a specific group of people* [20]. Academic conferences, banners, billboard advertisements, newspaper editorials, political television ads and events, public speaking events, and townhall meetings are forms of **public communication**.

Pagani [18] mentions that messages delivered through banners have a fairly limited impact, while hypermedia-based documents, related image files, and system functions are better candidates for examining the effectiveness of ICTs.

Social networks do not alter consistently the essence of public communication.

6. Mass Communication

Mass communications cover the *ICTs by which specialized social groups employ films, press, radio, films, etc. to share content to large groups of people that are heterogeneous and widely dispersed* [7].

Though social networks do not alter the essence of mass communication, social media tend to fashion lower income people's incomplete conception of social hierarchy because the latter have weak social contact networks outside their familial settings.

CONCLUSIONS

Both **social networks and social media have considerable impacts on communication, no matter the type.** Thus:

- Social networks facilitate the passage from *intrapersonal communication* to interpersonal, group, public, and even mass communication, increasing the number of communicators and making intrapersonal communication lose its private feature;
- Social networks can cause *interpersonal communication* lose its direct feature;
- Social networks have brought about new *organisational communication* roles;
- Only *group communication, public communication* and *mass communication* seem to have preserved their features in its relationship with social networks and social media.

The contribution of the authors consists in:

- Clarifying the concepts used (e.g. the eight ambient stimuli distinguishing between social media and non-digital contexts) given that the paper also addresses Romanian readers that are not familiar with English terminology in the field;
- Introducing new types of approach (e.g. situational) in the analysis of the impact of social networks on communication);
- Counteracting well-established opinions on the different types of communication (e.g. *there cannot be any intrapersonal communication within social networks, social networks alter the essence of organisational communication*);
- Drawing conclusions on the effect social networks can have on the different types of communication:
 - Social networks do not affect the formal/informal character of intrapersonal communication, but they facilitate the passage from intrapersonal communication to interpersonal, group, public, and even mass communication, increasing the number of communicators and making intrapersonal communication lose its “privacy” feature;
 - Social networks do not affect the number of communicators or the informal and private character of interpersonal communication, but they can cause interpersonal communication lose its non-mediated feature;
 - Social networks do not alter the essence of group communication;

- Though social networks do not alter the essence of organisational communication, they have brought about new organisational communication roles;
- Social networks do not alter consistently the essence of public communication.
- Though social networks do not alter the essence of mass communication, social media tend to fashion lower income people's incomplete conception of social hierarchy.

REFERENCES

- [1]. **BALA K.**, 2014, Social Media and Changing Communication Patterns. *Global Media Journal*, 5(1), 1-6.
- [2]. **BĂNEȘ A., ORBOI MANUELA-DORA, CONSTANTINESCU SIMONA**, 2017, Social networks important factor for the development of tourism in Romania. *Lucrări Științifice Management Agricol, „Managementul dezvoltării rurale durabile”*, 25-26 mai 2017, XIX (1), 135-138.
- [3]. **BAYM N., ZHANG Y. B., KUNKEL A. D., LIN M.-C., LEDBETTER, A.**, 2007, Relational quality and media use in interpersonal relationships. *New Media & Society*, 9, 735-752.
- [4]. **BUSINESS DICTIONARY**. Available at: <http://www.businessdictionary.com>. Retrieved on July 17, 2018.
- [5]. **CHARNIGO L., BARBETT-ELLIS P.**, 2007, Checking out Facebook.com: The impact of a digital trend on academic libraries. *Information Technology and Libraries*, 26(1), 23-34.
- [6]. **DICTIONARY.COM.**, 2019, Available at: <https://www.dictionary.com/>. Retrieved on October 1.
- [7]. **ENCYCLOPEDIA.COM.**, 2019, Available at: <https://www.encyclopedia.com/>. Retrieved on September 24.
- [8]. **GARTON L. E., WELLMAN B.**, 2011, Social impacts of electronic mail in organizations: A review of the research literature. Toronto: University of Toronto.
- [9]. **HAHN L. K., PAYNTON S. T.**, 2019, Survey of Communication Study. Available at: https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Survey_of_Communication_Study. Retrieved on October 7.
- [10]. **HARASIM L. M.** (Ed.), 1993, *Global Networks. Computers and International Communication*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- [11]. **HUMPHREYS L.**, 2013, Mobile social media: Future challenges and opportunities. *Mobile Media & Communication*, 1(1), 20-25.
- [12]. **IOSIM IASMINA, IANCU T., IANCU MIHAELA, MARIN DIANA, POPESCU GABRIELA**, 2013, Mass-media and Communication Terminology. *Lucrări științifice, Serie Agronomie*, 56 (2), 8 p.
- [13]. **LA FOND T., ROBERTS D., NEVILLE J., TYLER J., CONNAUGHTON S.**, 2012, The Impact of Communication Structure and Interpersonal Dependencies on Distributed Teams. 10.1109/SocialCom-PASSAT.2012.117. 558-565.
- [14]. **MCFARLAND L. A., PLOYHART R. E.**, 2015, Social Media: A Contextual Framework to Guide Research and Practice. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 100(6), 1653-1677.
- [15]. **MURTADA R., SALEM F.**, 2011, *Civil Movements: The Impact of Facebook and Twitter*. Dubai: Dubai School of Government.
- [16]. **NEWMAN N.**, 2009, *The rise of social media and its impact on mainstream journalism*. Oxford: University of Oxford.

- [17]. **OLLIER-MALATERRE A., ROTHBARD N. P., BERG J. M.**, 2013, When worlds collide in cyberspace: How boundary work in online social networks impacts professional relationships. *Academy of Management Review*, 38(4), 645-669.
- [18]. **PAGANI M.**, 2005, *Encyclopaedia of Multimedia Technology and Networking*. Hershey – London – Melbourne – Singapore: Idea Group Reference.
- [19]. **PLATON O.-E.**, 2015, Brand Communication on Social Networks. *Challenges of the Knowledge Society*, 5(1), 743-749.
- [20]. **REFERENCE**, 2019, Available at: <https://www.reference.com/>. Retrieved on October 1.
- [21]. **RUNCAN R., RUNCAN P.**, 2015, Effects of Computer-mediated Communication on Teenagers and Young People. *Revista de Informare și documentare: activitate științifică și profesională*, VIII, 127-133.
- [22]. **RUNCAN R.**, 2014, Communication and Manipulation through Social Networks. In C. Constantineanu, P. Runcan & R. Runcan (eds.), *Authority & Power of Christian Values*, Bucuresti, Editura Didactica si Pedagogica, 181-188.
- [23]. **RUNCAN R.**, 2015a, Facebookmania – The Psychological Addiction to Facebook and Its Incidence on the Z Generation. *Revista de Asistență Socială*, XIV(3), 127-136.
- [24]. **RUNCAN R.**, 2015b, The Hidden Face of Facebook: Informing the Youth of the Risks of Virtual Communication. *Revista de Informare și documentare: activitate științifică și profesională*, VIII, 119-126.
- [25]. **RUNCAN R.**, 2015c, Virtual Communication: Another Form of Communication? Bucuresti: Editura Didactica si Pedagogica.
- [26]. **RUNCAN R.**, 2016, Capcanele Facebook-ului. Comunicarea virtuală și efectele ei asupra relațiilor umane. București: Editura Didactică și Pedagogică.
- [27]. **RUNCAN R.**, 2017, Psycho-social Risks of Facebook Communication. *Revista de Asistență Socială*, XVI (2), 87-99.
- [28]. **SPONCIL M., GITIMU P.**, 2013, Use of social media by college students: Relationship to communication and self-concept. *Journal of Technology Research*, 4, 1-13.
- [29]. **SPROULL L., KIESLER S.**, 1993, Computers, Networks, and Work. In L. M. Harasim (Ed.), *Global Networks. Computers and International Communication*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 105-119.
- [30]. **THE FREE DICTIONARY**, 2019, Available at: <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/>. Retrieved on October 1.
- [31]. **TYSON J.**, 2009, Connecting through Facebook: The Influence of Social Networking on Communication. MA Thesis. Winston-Salem, N.C.: Wake Forest University.
- [32]. **VAN IDDEKINGE C. H., LANIVICH S. E., ROTH, P. L., JUNCO E.**, 2013, Social media for selection? Validity and adverse impact potential of a Facebook-based assessment. *Journal of Management*, 42 (7), 1811-1835.
- [33]. **WARDLE C., WILLIAMS A.**, 2008, *ugc@thebbc. Understanding its impact upon contributors, noncontributors and BBC News*. Cardiff: Cardiff University.
- [34]. **YESAYAN T., RIZVI K., SARDAR A., SHORT R.**, 2014, *Social Networking: A Guide to Strengthening Civil Society through Social Media*. Available at: www.usaid.gov/SMGuide4CSO. Retrieved on September 24, 2019.