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INFO-I 101

Midterm Paper

Part One: Social Media in Business

Social media is something that has taken the world by storm in almost every facet of day-to-day lives. It is very clear to see that a great number of people are active on social media every day and use these sites to gain information related to their friends, events, and the general community that they live in. One of these aspects regarding social media use is the increasing amount of businesses using social media to interact with customers and promote their company brand. Even as little as twenty years ago, businesses were barely concerned about using websites to reach their customers and now they are using a myriad of sites including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and even SnapChat to promote their image, provide customer service, and promote the products and services that they offer.

According to an article by Emily Copp on HooteSuite, there are over 6 billion Internet users today, about half of which have social media accounts (Copp). This number is obviously staggering as that means that 3 billion people can potentially be reached through social media which gives companies the ability to reach far more people than through any other advertising medium. Not only does social media give companies a vast number of people to interact with, but it also costs them relatively very little to do so. Obviously the companies need to pay people to manage their social media accounts and campaigns, but it is relatively cheap to post on social media since there are no fees associated with maintaining an account. Although certain sites do charge fees to become premium or verified users, giving the business’s account a little bit more credibility as the “official site”, each post is costing the business close to nothing compared to the costs of advertising through television, print ads, radio ads, etc. Altogether, it seems pretty that brand promotion through social media is a win-win for businesses.
Aside from being a great way to promote a business, more and more companies are using social media to participate in the community. According to Chris Lister from American Express, only about one in seven posts should directly promote the business and the rest should involve discussions of the community and other related topics (Lister). This means that businesses are taking on a new role of being more active in their communities and being promoters of more things than just themselves all thanks to the introduction of social media into our society. It seems very common these days to see companies tweeting about topics such as disaster relief, social advancement, poverty alleviation, etc. and not just pushing information about their products.

Despite all of the great benefits that businesses receive from having active social media campaigns, there are obviously going to be some negatives as well. Given that social media platforms allow for open participation from all users, there is potential for content to be shared that could negatively affect a business. Just like we talked about in our ethics lecture, there are a lot of problems with free speech and the Internet. The Internet tends to make things spread like wildfire and if someone posts something negative, it is going to be seen by millions of people very quickly. Relating this issue to business, companies need to be extremely careful when posting on their company accounts and also need to be very careful about how their employees are presenting themselves online as well. It is obviously bad news for a company if their employees present a terrible self-brand online. Aside from free speech and content, companies also need to be very wary of things like cybercrime. The more social media accounts a company has, the more potential there is for them to be hacked. Certain cybercriminals try to hack into company accounts and post malicious content. This obviously would look very bad on the company and it requires additional resources to be used on cyber security.

This topic is clear extension of computer science and informatics because social media itself is a product of computer science and the information shared on the Internet. It is particularly interesting because it shows that while there are always initial intentions for a product, its applicability often
changes over time. Originally, Facebook was designed as a way for college students to stay in touch and know what each other was doing. Now, there are countless numbers of businesses on Facebook that use the site to promote their brands and create a community of their customers.

Overall, I think that social media use in business is a good thing as it gives businesses a way to reach the vast majority, if not all, of their customers and is changing the role of businesses in our society by allowing them to be more active in other things than just selling products. The idea of using social media as a business is still relatively new, but it is quickly becoming the norm. The advancements of human computer interaction (HCI) like we talked about in class will only accelerate the use of social media sites by businesses as these sites are likely to get more and more advanced and become even better ways for companies to reach customers. In the future, there could even be a whole new social media platform that acts as a marketplace for businesses and users to connect and feature several pieces of technology stemming from HCI design that help customers find products that they might want.
Modern Family is a comedy about a family living in current times and the day-to-day situations that they get involved in. This is a great show not only because it is often times hilarious, but it also does a great job of keeping up with modern trends, just as the name of the show suggests, by including relevant topics in its episodes and even includes several traits amongst its characters that would be considered “modern” including interracial marriages, second marriages, and homosexuality. In this particular episode, one of the main character’s birthdays is the same day as the release of the new Apple iPad. Phil is the dad of the family that the show is about and he wants nothing more than an iPad for his birthday. Claire is Phil’s wife in the show and she originally tries to go get Phil the iPad for his birthday by waking up early to go to the store. She ultimately falls back asleep and by the time she finally is able to get to the store, they have sold out and she returns empty handed. Luke, the son in the family, ends up tricking one of his dad’s friends online into giving him an iPad by claiming that his father is dying and his last wish is to have an iPad. The episode goes on to show the celebration of Phil’s birthday and shows off several features of the iPad. It turns out that this episode was essentially a huge segment of product placement used by Apple (Chiang).

The main technology shown in this episode was obviously the Apple iPad. Although it is not the most current version of the iPad available, the main features are essentially the same as the most current technology. This technology is available in real life as it is sold at various stores throughout the world and also available online. The iPad is available to virtually anyone that has the ability to buy it given that they need the money and ability to go online to go to a store that sells it. According to Apple’s website, the cost of an iPad ranges from $269 to $1129. Financial ability to obtain the product comes into account for the more expensive models, but a price of $269 is affordable for most people especially
given that this is a similar cost for most other pieces of technology such as cell phones and gaming
consoles that many other people have. Overall due to its availability and rather affordable price
(compared to some technologies that can only be purchased by companies, universities, etc. due to
cost), I would say that the iPad is available to almost anyone.

It is hard to say that the iPad itself is solving problems since it shares so many features with the
iPhone, but overall the technology in the iPad solves many problems for society. People are now able to
be more connected on the go as the iPad lets them email, text message, and even video chat with other
people through FaceTime. Also, the iPad gives users access to roughly the same amount of resources as
a computer but in such a small size. In essence, the iPad solves the problem of limited mobility with
computers and gives them tremendous power in something that is far smaller and lighter than any
desktop or laptop computer.

Although the iPad has helped to ameliorate several problems, it also can cause some. In the
episode of Modern Family, there are a lot of issues that are portrayed revolving around the product
being such a hot item and people doing anything they can to obtain it. Other negatives of the product
not shown in the episode include theft due to its value and people becoming so consumed by the iPad
that they often miss out on the beauties of real life.

Since this episode essentially was an hour of product placement for the iPad, the device affects
characters in the show very similarly to how it affects people in real life. The iPad gives people access to
thousands of apps, music, videos, and the Internet. All of these have countless opportunities to affect
the lives of users since our society is so reliant on the Internet these days. Characters in Modern Family
are shown using some of the apps on the iPad just as normal users would do as well.

In my opinion, the iPad is a very ethical technology. It is simply a device that gives users the
ability to watch videos, use the Internet, play games, and stay in touch with others which is not
unethical at all. However, there are some potential unethical aspects of the iPad which include how it is
used and how it is made. Like we talked about in lecture, there are often negative side effects of
technology that are not ethical just like with Amazon’s shipping centers. In regards to the iPad, there is
potential for there to be unethical treatment of Apple worker and suppliers who helped to make the
product. Also, there is great potential for iPad users to use the device for unethical acts. However,
despite these two potential factors, I still believe that the iPad is an ethical technology.

In five to ten years, I think that this technology will become more and more advanced. Apple will
continue to launch new models of the iPad that has better features including more processing power, a
better camera, a higher resolution screen, etc. Eventually this technology will become obsolete, just like
practically every technology, but I don’t see that happening in the next 5-10 years. Instead, there will
more likely just be more and more advance iPads that have brilliant displays, cameras as powerful as
DSLR models, and more processing power than today’s desktops.
Works Cited

