

Impact of digitisation on media consumption



How has digitisation changed media consumption? Discuss with reference to at least one specific example.

The last decades have brought a revolution on how and where information and entertainment are being delivered. About 13 years ago MySpace was the best source for social networking. Facebook and YouTube did not even exist then. Now Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have things ranging from news, sports, entertainment clips to original creations. However, this is not just about the development of more sources of media but it is about how media are delivered. Today everything we see, hear and read, is digitized. They are a product of those countless 1's and 0's codes. That in turn means, that as far as technology is concerned, it is all the same; print, audio and video have no difference. Every conceivable kind of information comes to us on the same device. If you own a smart phone then you automatically have a phone, a tv screen, a newspaper, a camera, a file holder, a radio and many more. This has shifted the power away from the providers to the users of information. Media gets shaped by the consumers. Media convergence has encouraged an increase of participatory culture where the consumer is also the producer of media. As a result, participation in media has leaked into politics. The rise of the network society has also led to transformations of social dynamics and interpersonal relationships as well as how individuals relate to institutions. Donald Trump's tweeting demonstrate the notion of relationship shift in three different ways.

In order to understand how Trump uses tweets in social media and with what outcome, one needs to be aware of how an individual can change the course of virtual products. Everyone is potentially a producer of media as well as a

consumer of media. We live in a world where sharing with each other what we create is mutually rewarding and has an enormous emotional satisfaction. Going back 200 years in history, people struggled with the limits of technology to figure out a way to share their ideas with each other and to communicate effectively across great geographic distances. Middle of the 19th century, teenagers were producing publications using tin-toy printing press, where they had to sit and type letter by letter in order to print something (Leurs, 2017). They would print them and these things would then circulate on a national scale. That is the same impulse that leads kids today to put content on their Facebook page or to make their own song videos for YouTube. This desire to create and share what you create with others is really powerful. Is not an agency or a network that is pushing content to be viewed, but it is the consumer that engages other consumers with that content (Jenkins, Ford and Green, 2013: 2). For instance, on Facebook there is a 'share' button where you can share content with your friends. If your friends like it then they can share it again and so on and this is one of the ways a content can go viral. Consequently, spreadability is all about the choices the consumers make which affects the flow of media through the culture (Jenkins, Ford and Green, 2013: 3-5). Spreadability allows information to flow in an interconnected society. Content does not just move around on its own accord; participatory culture allows media content to spread through multiple active choices (Jenkins, 2006: 3). Individuals have a greater control over the means of cultural production and circulation than ever before. This is because, it is not the creator of a virtual product that is spreading it to the mass, but it is the masses who are spreading it among one another and their networks.

Trump's relationship with the media is complex in three ways. Firstly, Trump's tweets depict how participatory culture is important for the vitality of an individual or a virtual product. According to Castell, network society forms the new architecture of society. Networks have an open structure and are able to expand and contract as necessary. The communication that occurs across these networks is multidimensional and multidirectional. For instance, during Trump's presidential campaign, in 2016, there was an apparent rise in Trump's tweets. His tweets were then taken out of context and converted to memes. These memes were then uploaded in multiple online pages such as 9Gag and Reddit. Through participatory culture people from all over the world could be part of Trump's presidential campaign. Additionally, people were not only sharing Trump's tweets but someone created a page (www.faketrumptweet.com) where anyone can create a fake trump tweet and then share it as an actual tweet. Therefore, the rise of participatory culture in a network society has led to transformations of social dynamics. Trump's constant controversial Tweets, during his campaign, made him look more like a mass media celebrity rather than a traditional politician. This demonstrates that people were connecting around and through Trump. This was about what the people did. Trump was simply a name attached to participatory culture as large numbers of young people moved for the first time in the political process. Wider culture is now translating politics to popular culture. Trump's constant tweeting proves that politics is moving away from policy discourse and into a more engaged audience.

Secodly, Trump's tweets portray the blur lines between real and fake context in the network society. Cultural networks have evolved from the virtual

network society and emerged from the industrial age to the information age (Castell). In this transition capitalism is no longer centred on the production of material goods, but on the information and knowledge. Trump has often been criticized for tweeting misleading information. However, not everyone can identify fake news. Pierre Levy, a French philosopher, cultural theorist and media scholar, developed the idea of collective intelligence. Levy argues that in a networked society nobody knows everything (Levy, 1997: 13). Everybody knows something but there is an enormous array of all kinds of expertise and knowledge out there. Hence, we rely, to some extent, on media to make sense of the world around us. If someone relies on Trump's tweets to receive basic information then this person will not only receive deceptive information but a great amount of biasness too. With digitization's advancements, each individual, sitting behind a computer or a tablet, has in their hands more power than any previous generation could imagine. Each individual should make extra effort on social media to try and verify stories before passing them on, especially if they confirm a pre-existing bias.

Thirdly, through Trump's tweets the representation of a paradoxical connection with globalization is evident and this allows information to be instantaneously consumed. His lack of globalized thinking is evident in many of his tweets such as ' America must put its own citizens first, because only then can we truly Make America Great Again! #JointAddress #AmericanSpirit' (tweet was posted on Feb. 28, 2017, 9: 14 p. m.) is just an example out of the tens. What Trump is trying to do is abandon globalization using globalized means. The nature of the network society, and thus

globalization, make it possible for Trump to be accessed by different people in different places at the same time. As a result, social media becomes a meeting point and a place of global scale exchange of opinions and statements. The difference in a network society is that the process of managing information within social networks is achieved using electronic based technologies. Still, what is interesting with Trump's tweets is that when he tweets it not only spreads throughout social media, but it also gets attention from traditional media (newspapers etc). Thus, he appeals to everyone by starting national as well as global discussions 140 characters at a time. As a result, societies do not have to be attached to a specific geographic space such as a nation or state, but simply to the space of communication and information flows. Hence, in a way, it should not feel weird that a president tweets this much, because he is communicating in a way that any other person is.

Consequently, Donald Trump's tweeting allows power relationships to shift and it makes participatory culture even more evident in the network society. This brings out an outcome where consumers are more intimately involved on how the media landscape looks like. Every minute new layers of content are created. People add their own variance by alternating information, creating new content, or adding on to the spreadability of virtual products. However, it is easy for someone to consume deliberate misinformation via social media. Nonetheless, the process of creating new product, whether they entail real or fake information, keeps on accelerating and expanding, thus, media will continue to create a type value and meaning as it travels across cultures through network societies. This is because humans

correspondingly shape and reshape communications and networks. Finally, Castells theory of the increasing connectedness of human society and our reliance on information and communication technologies is an important contribution to our understanding of globalization in the media and Donald Trump is the ultimate participator and reciprocator of this through his tweeting.

Citations

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