

Essay on the true meaning of social media

[Technology](#), [Development](#)



Ten years ago, if someone were to use the phrase “#YOLO” you would have no clues as to what he or she meant. Since the rise of the Internet started in the early 90s, the network population has grown from millions to billions. Social media has become a regular stopping point for most, including actors, activists, government organizations as well as the public. Thus, I focus on seeking the answers to ascertain whether current social media is being utilized for the purposes, it was initially intended. In the article “ Small Change, Why the revolution will not be tweeted,” Malcome Gladwell insists that social media is nothing more than “ weak tie (Gladwell, par. 7).”

In my opinion, I agree with here sentiments. While the social media has been acclaimed as a tool through which the society can relay their message, it is not enough to administer all that comes with change. For change to take place in society there is a need for physical presence of whoever is concerned. The social media has just been used to relay the message at the most oportune time. However, in terms of action and results, it has kept a low profile. As Gladwell acknowledges, advocacy alone is not enough, it is that ability to confront the problem and seek practical solution to it. Thus without a practical framework, social media plays an insignificant role.

Seeking a way to utilize ‘ the ability of social media to reach a mass audience’ in order to achieve practical benefits is a dream that seems far from realty. While it seems to bring people closer together, it cannot be said to posses the ability to influence their immediate action because of the realities of geographical separation.

While it may be great for communicating with friends and catching up with people, it cannot be acclaimed as a tool for real change. Gladwell goes on to

discuss the events that happened in Greensboro NC in the 1960s. Four young men sat down for a cup of coffee in a local lunch spot. Their ideologies then led to the creation of civil rights “ fever” in several states. He states “ Fifty years after the most extraordinary episodes of social upheaval in American history, we seem to have forgotten what activism is (Gladwell, par. 6).” He points out “ these events in the early sixties became a civil-rights war that engulfed the South for the rest of the decade-and it happened without e-mail, texting, Facebook, or Twitter.” I agree with Gladwell's point of view. I feel that social media is not being used for purposes initially intended. He states in his article that, " real social problems cannot be solved with powerless voices hiding behind a computer".

In the rebuttal article “ Biz Stone on Twitter and Activism”, by Biz Stone himself, the author begins by making a strong statement. He says, “ Communication among individuals in real time allows many to move together as one-suddenly uniting everyone in a common goal” (Biz Stone, par. 12). To me, this is a great thought, but that is all it is, a thought. For you to understand why I feel this way, let me share a little Twitter history with you. Created in March of 2006, 3 friends wanted an application that could facilitate news and gossip sharing through their phones and computers on real time. They wanted to avoid the use of email and text messages. The name was inspired by the photo-sharing website Flickr and the idea of “ chirps” of information, later called “ tweets”.

They all merged to form the name Tweeter. After word of mouth, several “ tweets” and a few short years later, Twitter is now the top social media applications used today. The impact of these applications to the lives of the

users is a source of pride to the application designers. They feel impressed of the impact. In the article, "The History of Twitter" written by Mark Johnson, he states, "Social media and micro-blogging site Twitter has changed political communication profoundly (Johnson, par. 9)." In the past, a select group of those "in the know" only reported political news and commentary. However, today, we see both politicians and the Average Joe on Twitter sharing their political banter and opinions. It is a new era of citizen journalists and we see people speaking up and speaking out about the things that are important to them."

The question that arises, therefore, is whether the 15, 000, 000 active Twitter users are using it strictly for important news issues as it was intended. I find this quote very interesting because it does not create the same impression of the Twitter I have known and enjoyed. In the current generation, social media has become a place for gossip, and non-important issues to travel fast. It is a place to "like" and "follow" celebrities. The most probable truth is that you will most likely never meet them. The closest experience is to feel like you know them. Do not get me wrong, I love my fair share of Hollywood gossip, but what is it helping? I do not doubt that Twitter and Facebook cannot provide news at a fast pace, but it is what we choose to do with that news that is what is important.

Twitter was created to keep people up to date on real social problems and empower people to act on it, but instead, people choose to hide behind their computers and essentially become voiceless for the issues that matter. In the same article, Mark Johnson lists the current five most popular Twitter accounts. Coming in at number one, the one and only Lady Gaga

(@ladygaga), and not far behind is a young pop singer Justin Bieber (@justinbieber) (Johnson, par. 11). To me, for a site that has supposedly changed political communication “ profoundly” I find it odd that the top two Twitter accounts are from celebrity singers. In fact, out of the top five, the only non pop singer is President Barack Obama, who came in at number five with almost 26, 000, 000 followers.

Even with that information Biz Stone argues, “ Big change can come in small packages too” “ Lowering the barrier to activism doesn’t weaken humanity, it brings us together, and it makes us stronger (Biz Stone, par. 6).” I agree that power in numbers can truly achieve greatness, and in recent events, Twitter and other social media outlets have brought great change in China and other countries. In the article “ The Revolt of China’s Twittering Classes” written by Young Hu, we learn about a man named Lui Xiaobo. Xiaobo was awarded the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize in China for his accomplishments organizing a non-violent struggle for fundamental human rights in China. Young states, “ That award comes at a crucial moment in Chinese politics, as it may well become a stepping stone on China’s long march toward greater freedom (Hu, Yong, par. 1).” Though I agree that Yong has many good points as he insists that Twitter is a major tool used in today’s social activism issues, but I find it interesting that we do not see the same results in America. Are we as Americans that selfish and naïve that we have forgotten to place our focus on what is important to us? What social crisis are we solving with the tools even to us?

As you can tell this is, and will always be a controversial subject with loaded responses from many. I acknowledge that we have seen amazing changes in

social activism all with using social media as the main tool, but to me I do not believe that we can create big enough change with social media alone. In order for real change to happen in America, face to face communication, time and hard work will always trump social media outlets.

Commentary

In the article 'Hunger Pangs', the writer discusses the effects of healthy eating habits as well as our personal obligation on the issue. In this perspective, the writer has narrowed down the topic and began from discussing the reasons as to why people have little concern for their eating habits. The link with the works of other authors is greatly doing to support the article's sentiments. The approach towards the issue of health eating habits is one that I admire from the writer. The writer does not shy away from critiquing the medical insurance schemes offered by federal authorities. The sole reason is because; the writer thinks that as long as people are aware that someone will pay for their hospital bills, they will have little concern about eating habits. This is simply because they are not obliged to pay for the consequences. On another admirable aspect of the article is the way the writer uses their personal traits to articulate on the issue. Offering their own personal eating habit assessment as a platform for discussion creates a sense of realism and originality of the content. The whole paper in general addressed the issue in a simple and easy to understand format.

Works Cited

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