

Social media and networks (15 EC) - 201400237

Study level	Bachelor final year
Study load	15 EC
Faculty	Faculty of Behavioural Management and Social Sciences (BMS)
Provisional starting date	BSc degree programme Communication Studies Quartile 1B – 2015-2016
Prerequisites	120 EC finished, relevant domain-specific prior knowledge
Instruction language	English
English language requirement	IELTS 6.0 or TOEFL iBT 80
Tuition fees	To be paid at home institution

COURSE INFORMATION

It is of all times that the emergence of a new medium affects the networks in which we find ourselves. However, the impact of the most recent addition to the existing media palette, namely social media, is unprecedented and provides more challenges and opportunities than ever before. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube or LinkedIn, all these platforms can no longer be ignored. They are a structural part of today's society. Accompanying technical developments furthermore cause communication that occurs over these media platforms to change continuously. In this module, students acquire a broad knowledge about networks and social media

6A1: Network Communication and Social Media

In this module component students gain insight into important theoretical aspects that provide a framework for the emergence of the network society and social media and its impact on society. The importance and impact is stressed from economical, organizational, political and law, but also from social, cultural and psychological perspectives, both at organizational and individual level. In addition to the opportunities that social media offer, students also learn to critically reflect on the impact of communication through social media. Concepts as cybercrime, cyber bullying, privacy, transparency, authorship, identity, and social relationships are discussed. After all, social media are not undisputed and recent developments demonstrate important ethical issues. Students will identify both opportunities and challenges that social media create.

6A2 Ethics of New Media

In this module component, students will study ethical theories that structure our reflection about right and wrong, situated in the context of social media and computer-mediated communication. Ethics is ultimately the study of living together in harmony, whether online or offline. We will examine how the Internet expands our possibilities for interacting with one another and what new challenges are posed for morality, politics, and self-understanding. Ethical and political theories will provide frameworks that help us understand these challenges and decide how to meet them.

6C: Network and Content Analysis

As part of the project (6D) students learn how to conduct a content and network analysis of data collected on social media, here being Twitter. By means of Grounded Theory, Twitter data will be

collected and analysed. Content analysis on Twitter has some important characteristics. Due to the personal and interactive communication format, tweets are often less formal and unmediated. They are fragmented, do not follow grammar rules, and rely heavily on slang, abbreviations, and entity variations. Minimal clues are left for automatically identifying context. Network analysis will be performed to identify the structure of the network of the chosen organization, key players in the network (organizations or individual people), their roles in the network and connections.

6D: Organizational Social Media Strategy

In this individual project, students develop a Twitter strategy for an organization. The base of this strategy is an analysis of Twitter messages from and about the organization. Over a period of one month, the student collects all communicated tweets. This collection, for example, enables the possibility to analyze how often specific words are mentioned or what messages are often shared or retweeted. Network and content analysis as described above (6C) provide insights on what the network of people look like that talk about the organization, and what is being communicated. From the analysed data, students write a social media strategy. The goals of this strategy depend on the organizational goals. It can be branding, engagement, informing, conversational, persuasion, problem solving, community building, relationship building, commitment, co-creation, service delivery etc. The focus the student chooses depends on the organization. The eventual developed strategy will be presented by means of a poster presentation.

LEARNING GOALS

Each module component has its own specific learning objectives:

6A1: Network Communication and Social Media

At the end of this module component, students are expected to be able to:

1. outline the development of social media and Web 2.0 in the past decennia from a communication-scientific perspective;
2. explain what is new about new media in comparison with traditional media;
3. characterize the social transformation from a mass society to a network society;
4. understand the importance of new media from economic, political, law, social, cultural, and psychological perspectives.

6A2: Ethics of New Media

At the end of this module component, students are expected to be able to:

1. describe how deontology, utilitarianism, and virtue theory structure our reflection on ethical dilemmas;
2. identify ways in which media technologies can reinforce cultural values and discuss associated challenges with regard to autonomy, egalitarianism, colonialism, and distributive justice;
3. describe how new media raises ethical concerns at various levels; personal, interpersonal, community, national, and international.

6C: Network and Content Analysis

At the end of this module component, students are expected to be able to:

1. understand the possibilities and limitations of collecting data in social media;
2. understand the possibilities and limitations of inductive research;
3. independently collect data from Twitter in order to define an applicable social media strategy for organizations;

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4. independently conduct a content analysis of self-collected Twitter data by using Excel;
5. independently conduct a network analysis of self-collected Twitter data by using Gephi.

6D: Project: Developing an organizational social media strategy

At the end of this module component students are expected to be able to:

1. advice an organization about implementing a social media strategy;
2. use grounded theory (or inductive research) to help organizations cope with problems encountered in the social media environment;
3. gain insights in the problems new media communication scientists encounter; and;
4. come up with relevant solutions to these problems.
5. formulate a convincing strategic advice for organizations;
6. use research results in the formulation of strategic advice;
7. visualize the strategic advice in a poster presentation.