

## **New Media Critique – Weakness of Social Media**

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**Key words:** social media, digital, culture, privacy

**Abstract.** Nowadays, no one can live without the internet, the new media. According to the 2019 digital report by “We Are Social” “Global internet users have grown by 8.6 percent over the past twelve months, with 350 million new users contributing to an overall total of 4.437 billion by the beginning of April 2019 [1]”. Therefore, new media has already become a main part of people’s life.

### **1. Introduction**

Before the revolution of the web 2.0, the pioneers of this revolution dreamed of constructing a new world based on the Internet in which everybody could express their own opinions freely. In this new world people would communicate with each other more frequently, efficiently and conveniently than ever before. However new media, especially digital media, also have led to some consequences on people’s culture, working life and privacy. This paper mainly introduced some of the disadvantages of social media and the harm it brings to people under the background of the popularity of new media, then introduced how to solve such problems.

### **2. “Culture Producer”**

New media have made an immense contribution to the contents of our consumer culture. One important aspect is that we can no longer form our own opinions even if we seem to become freer to express our views than before. The internet disguises itself to be “democratic”. At first, it seemed that we could dig much deeper into the “true” information via these new media in a more critical, globalized and rational perspective, but that is just the appearance of it. After a deeper analysis, it turns out that too much information is circulated on the internet and inevitably becomes a quick and often superficial representation of the world in the process of decoration . In other words, it has no real value except making profits for the producers. Furthermore, the content of the new media is actually largely controlled by the government or companies which possess the majority of resources and power.

Such circumstance could be well explained by the phenomenon of “buying fans”. After the popularity of Facebook, a phenomenon of “buying fans” has slipped into the internet. Users purchase fake fans through the internet to enlarge their groups of followers. With more and more people using Facebook, this phenomenon has become more and more popular. Buying fans will aggravate the effect of "opinion leader" or "the effect of sheet flock", leading to the emergence of "mainstream" views on social media, while other non-mainstream views are severely criticized. The space for freedom of expression and opinion has become narrower.

As a result, there is a risk that the public view will be manipulated by capital or individuals. The fact that 1 plus 1 equals 2 is eternal, but it might be “changed” by a group of people. They can decide that 1 plus 1 equals 10 in the same way that they decide the values of diamonds. Governments and companies may not waste time on deciding the result of 1+1, but they have the ability to do that.

### **3. The speed of rumor spreading - the difficulty to access reality**

There is a big difference between new media and old media, which means that the user base of new media is huge. Compared with old media, the number of new media users has reached hundreds of

millions. People used to watch the news alone. However, the new media now gathers hundreds of millions of people in the same place, so at the same time, people can see the same news and see other people's views. A huge number of users will bring potential risks. In the past, if people made rumors, they could only spread them by word of mouth. Nevertheless, after the emergence of new media, even rumors can be spread quickly in a few minutes. Many people who don't know what happened will make an early conclusion to the case, which will quickly affect those who watch the news and read the comments at the same time, and bring irreparable harm to the victims.

For example, there was such an event on Weibo which was the same as Twitter in China. The incident is described as follows: a girl called Saya walked her dog without tying the dog leash. The dog was scared and bumped into a pregnant woman, causing a miscarriage to the pregnant woman. In order to protect the pregnant woman, her husband beat up the dog, but was abused and cursed by the dog owner. Even the pregnant woman was beaten by Saya.

However, before the results of the police investigation came out, many people who claimed to be neighbors of the dog owners published the bad things Saya had done before on the Internet, and wrote and compiled many details about what they saw on the day of the incident to express Saya's inexcusable guilt.

This information was quickly forwarded and commented by people who paid more attention to the event. At one time, hundreds of millions of netizens began to abuse and attack Saya, and even cursed her family. After reading such remarks, Saya's grandfather died of a heart attack that night.

However, after the investigation results come out, the truth was not as people said before. It was the pregnant woman's husband who beat the dog first, and Saya didn't beat the pregnant woman. Finally, the police acquitted Saya. Nonetheless, the damage that the rumors has brought to Saya and her family is irreparable, and Saya's grandfather can't regain his life.

#### **4. Lower and lower bottom lines of knowledge sharers**

New media are also lowering the bottom line of knowledge by using the internet for every piece of information, everybody shares their knowledge, habits and even secrets — whether true or false.

For example, Wendy, a blogger, shared her experience of diet during her weight-loss period with the public on her Instagram account. In 2018, in such an incredibly short time, 20 million fans followed her, which was a huge web-based success. An army of fans tend to recklessly follow her to develop their own list. Nevertheless, since she was not a professional dietitian, her diet list might be harmful to her body in the long term.

Many fitness bloggers have no professional skills, but they still post such information in order to get fans. What we send to Twitter today is not condemned, and everybody, even those who are no experts in a field, can share their views; the result is that the bottom line of acquiring cultural value is getting lower and lower, and knowledge is being lost.

What's more, given that many people just share something to get attention, it so happens that they needn't be responsible for what they send to the public. Before the advent of the internet, people went to experts and asked for their advice; now they search for users' opinions. People may want to ask bloggers about their illness. When they are sick, or when their pets are sick, after they have tried all the effective methods provided by those "professors", if they still haven't recovered, then they may go to see a doctor.

Due to the large number of users of social networking sites, it is unrealistic to review each blog one by one, and the review of a blog also involves the privacy of free speech users and other things, which cannot be done.

#### **5. "digital labor"**

"The Internet has become a system that is easy to connect and anyone can play, where the sites and practices of work and entertainment increasingly use people as a resource for economic amelioration by a handful of oligarchic owners." [2]

Although web-based work environments emerged, those environments are devoid of worker protection even in the most precarious working-class jobs. There is no minimum wage line for workers, no medical insurance or health insurance, and even some jobs are unpaid. Workers like fans and bloggers don't even know they are "working". "They number in the millions, and their free labor activities have created a lot of corporate revenues, far more than the \$7 million monthly earned by AOL." [3] With the rise of the Internet and the increasing popularity of social networking sites, new freelancers and flexible workers have emerged. They are still not guaranteed, but their workload is becoming heavier and heavier due to the popularity and globalization of social networking platform, the coincidence of labor and leisure time, and the disappearance of the boundary between production and consumption, work and leisure.

Amazon Mechanical Turk is a very typical example. The so-called integration of artificial intelligence resource still depends on human wisdom and worker resources. A large number of image collections, video classification and large data integration need a criterion. The classification of the videos such as Google Open Image Datasets, Markup Video in YouTube-8M etc., can not only rely on machinery, and the rules of classification cannot be detailed to each video. Only human can watch the video, and feel small differences among these videos, pictures, data, so as to classify. Because machines cannot feel and have human emotion, so if we rely solely on machines, the requester of Amazon Mechanical Turk might be confused by the classification, because it is not the way of human thinking.

Amazon Mechanical Turk is a crowdsourcing marketplace that makes it easier for individuals and businesses to outsource their processes and jobs to a distributed workforce that can perform these tasks virtually. Nowadays, that Amazon Mechanical Turk has registered more than 500,000 users, and this crowdsourcing data calibration has been developed into a new industry, a new "digital labor". These registered users are the workers of Amazon Mechanical Turk, repeating the same thing day after day. However, the job is extremely unstable, because people don't know when requesters will release it. Even wages are not guaranteed through this platform, depending entirely on requesters' needs; If you cannot meet the requirement, your work is a waste of time. In this case, some people work only for a few minutes a day, while others work 24 hours a day. These jobs combine people's working and leisure time. Workers on Amazon Turk are not protected, and there are no laws on such labors. Workers' security is in a very unstable state.

Therefore, "digital labor" in the overdeveloped world is contingent upon the exploitation of the labor by the "digital workers."

## **6. Disclosure of privacy**

The danger we expose ourselves to the world without any protection and privacy can be divided into two aspects.

### **6.1 people can cheat by stealing other people's pictures, blogs and pretending to be others**

As the *Catfish* (2008) documentary tells people, Angela, a 40-year-old woman suffering from stress in her life, had been searching for photos and works of others on Facebook and other Internet platforms, disguising herself as a 20-year-old girl and dating Yaniv for nearly eight months, during which time she had been constantly updating her photos. But it wasn't her.

This film warns us that pictures, videos and other information we upload on social platforms may be stolen and not protected by patents.

### **6.2 Companies steal private information**

Most of people had experienced that they got calls from some pyramid companies, but they had never contacted these companies. They didn't know how these companies pirated their phone numbers. People's addresses and phone numbers are probably exposed when they shop online, or when they share photos of their houses on Facebook. Or the living conditions people share on the social platforms, and some emotions they share, will become the resources for some companies to make profits. When people are extremely short of money, there will always be loan companies calling them

to promote, and when people are in a state of anxiety, they are likely to fall into a trap to solve the problem.

## **7. Conclusions**

For the problems above, there would be some solutions to make some improvements on social media. First, those media company can create and invent more secure applications to protect users' privacy. For example, photos cannot be easily downloaded from others' blogs. Also, they can employ more ministers to serve as Net police to help filter out useless and untrue information, so as to prevent the promotion of rumor and false knowledge. Furthermore, the government can publish labor laws to protect the right of freelancers and highlight the boundaries between production and consumption, work and leisure.

## **Reference**

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