

Article-7

Global Media Journal – Indian Edition

Sponsored by the University of Calcutta www.caluniv.ac.in

ISSN 2249 – 5835

Winter-Summer Issue/December 2016 – June 2017

Volume: 7 / Number: 2, Volume: 8/ Number: 1

COMPARISON BETWEEN SOCIAL COMMUNICATION ETHICS AND SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION ETHICS: A PARADIGM SHIFT

By

Koustav Mukherjee

UGC-NET, University Research Fellow,

Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Calcutta

Email: kstmukherjee59@gmail.com

Abstract: *Communication, from the beginning of life on Earth, has been the only way to express feelings between creatures. Slowly it developed with the evolutionary process that led to the emergence of anatomically modern humans. Human Communication has been changing till now, matching with the time, environment and the upgradation of social and communication instruments. In different society, the ethics of communication is different as it is set to match the standards of the particular society. Ethics, in communication, continues to change as the standards of different social and communication institutions change. From the start of the new century, we have been getting familiar with a new world, new environment – the virtual world. With the development and reach of high speed internet, the usage of social networking sites has been increased. People started to make friends and chat with them for hours. There is a paradigm or a specific framework of communication for a specific society as it has been going on for years. A large number of people already know how to communicate in such a society. All the conventional media know what and how to present to the people. But virtual world is relatively new and a large number of people are yet to be introduced. It is not society or country bound. Therefore, it is difficult to make rules, society wise, for social media. People can easily share or say what they can't on the conventional society. In this article, I tried to compare between conventional social communication ethics and social media communication ethics.*

Key Words: Communication, Ethics, Social Media, Paradigm.

Introduction:

Human communications are the expressions of different feelings that we want to make others understood. Basically, There are two types of communication- verbal and non-verbal. In both the cases ethics should be maintained. Ethics are the preset morals and values that reflects someone's identity, education or dignity. After the heavy usage of social media ethics of communication have started to change and thus we have been experiencing a paradigm shift.

Therefore my Research Objectives are:

- 1/ To know what is communication ethics and how it effects communication.
- 2/To know about the social media communication ethics.
- 3/To findout the changes in the ethics in social media communication ethics.
- 4/To show how the paradigm shifts.

Communication Paradigm:

Communication Paradigm is a set of perspectives shared by many theories. It defines the questions to be asked and the methods to define the answers of those questions. Human communication is such a complex phenomenon that the communication researchers use different theories to find out the answers of their queries. ^[1]Paradigm shift is a transition from one set to another set.

Literature Review:

1/ Toward a Paradigm Shift for Intercultural and International Communication: New Research Directions

By

Getinet Belay

(Journal name: Annals of the International Communication Association;

ISSN:Print ISSN: 2380-8985 Online ISSN: 2380-8977

Volume 16, 1993- issue;1)

In this article, author tried to argue for a new concept of communication- Interactive-multiculture building. In order to provide the concept of new paradigm he addressed two core issues related to communication across the world irrespective of different culture and society: 1/ the philosophical perspectives and the research theories that have heretofore influenced the interactional process globally and 2/ the emerging patterns of change that challenged the that time present set of conditions.

2/Social Responsibility Worldwide

By

Clifford Christians and Kaarle Nordenstreng
(Journal Name: Journal of Media ethics,
Exploring questions of Mass Morality
Print ISSN: 2373-6992 Online ISSN: 2373-700X
Volume 19, 2004- Issue 1

In this article ,we find that since post world war II , a social responsible theory of the press has emerged in various democratic country. Hutchins Commission in the USA is the source of this paradigm in some cases. An emphasis on serving the society has started to grow . The principles are the citizen ethics rather than the professional terms and conditions. This is how Social responsible model got its popularity. .Media persons started to provide international references for accessing local news media practices. Social responsibility is the paradigm that challenged the previous ones.

What is Communication Ethics?

If we want to compare between the ethics of conventional communication and social media communication, weshould have a clear idea of what is ethics in communication. Thereare different types of communication- intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, mass and mass line. Besides this, in human life there are various types of communication, like social communication & political communication and communication with family and relatives.

Communication ethics are the rules driven by an individual's or group's presetmorals that create some effects in that particular communication. Moral depends on the mindset of that communicator. Usually it is seen that when a person communicates with another person, mostlyhe/she tries to communicate with the ethics with good moral. These types of communicate on includes interpersonal, group and mass communications.

Communication ethics effects not only individual or group communication, but also effects on business or corporate communications and other professional communications. There are some companies those advertise their products without making clear about the risk factors. Side by side there are some organizations which advertise with clarity so that the customer can know about the exact services and the risk factors. Advertisements of mutual fund companies can be taken as the example. After every advertisement some mandatory lines are displayed on TV screen to make investor aware-

“Mutual fund investments are subject to market risks. Read all scheme related

Documents before investing...”^[2]

A business with unethical communication is not only less effective but also risky too. An unethical business communication has the risks of judicial intervention. It may withhold evidence that it is harming the environment or breaking a law through a lack of transparency. A transparent communication encourages trust and good faith on the organization.

Ethical values are slightly different when it comes to government communication or political communication. After the end of five year term or before any election a detailed list of developments is published by the Government. Now, this is an example of half ethical communication, as, all the good works are highlighted and all the demerits are hidden to catch the votes. Opposition parties also publish manifestos where false promises and claims are made. Political and organizational communications are mixed with ethical and unethical moral values.

National Communication Association (NCA), established by Western Michigan University in 1985 has a Communication ethics division. For last 13 years, The Communication Ethics Conference has been organized once a year. Students and professors from communication background take part in that communication.

There is an organization named The Institute of Communication Ethics (ICE) which is dedicated to improve communications by promoting understanding of its moral foundations. The main moto is to provide a centre for the worldwide study and practice for the learning/teaching of communication ethics. We aim to build bridges between the study of moral communication and its practical application.^[3] Situated in London, it also organizes conferences on communication ethics every year.

Social Media and Social Media Communication Ethics:

A social networking site is a website that creates a community of online users breaking down the barriers of time, zone, culture, society and distance. This is also a good platform to organize and socialize. International Telecommunication Union or ITU every years releases a report regarding the usage of social networking sites. According to ITU the approx users of social sites have gone to near about 53%. Near about 3.9 billion of the world's population use internet.^[4] Social networking sites like Facebook is highly helpful for sharing interest, news , business. People can see your posts and contact with you according to their needs.

Although the moto of the social networking sites are to create online unity and deliver good moral goals to the online users, still the developers of the social sites do not know about the effect on their potential users before developing the sites. This is totally depend on the users whether they would use the platform to share constructive ideas or disruptive ideas. This depends on the level of the users. As there are no such directions or rules for social sites regarding how much to share, some people use it to share their unethical values or destructive ideas.

As social media grown stronger and stronger, the social networking sites, these days, have clearly started to modify our behavior, thoughts and lifestyle. Social networking sites started to work on the minds of people of different age, sex or race. People are seemed to be hypnotized by the communication power of these social sites. Via different chat box and chat rooms we can communicate with more than one people at a time.

So many social networking sites are there, but Facebook, Twitter, and Skype are the popular sites as per ratings. Applications like Whatsapp, Messenger, Instagram help us to share our thoughts, pictures and videos with a lightning speed. Photo sharing is an essential part of Facebook. A number of people give likes, reactions and comments on that photo. Suppose, if I upload a photo on Facebook after having 4000 friends in my friends' list, I am surely uploading the photo to show my friends. The more I get likes and comments the more I become popular or active in terms of social networking sites. Therefore, to become popular, social approval is must. These days, almost for every purpose social approval is vital in the virtual world.

What Are the Ethical Issues in Social Sites?

These days, social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter or Google have a huge number of followers and subscribers as these sites give facilities like messaging, sharing pictures, videos and informations easily. Side by side, one can gain his/her popularity by increasing number of followers in his/her page. For this, often it is seen that a number of active users have often been targeted as it is easy to get their location, number and other details. Recently Facebook has added a feature that if you search on Facebook putting someone's phone number, Facebook will show his/her profile if that person uses Facebook via smartphone, because from smart phones one can open a Facebook profile just by giving the contact number as the id.^[5]

Though social sites are highly viable and capable of doing communication wonders and bringing growth in human communication, there are some ethical issues about which people should be aware of. The ethical issues are discussed below:

i/ Expressing Thoughts and Interests:

Although article 19(1)(A) of our Indian constitution ensures freedom of speech and expressions for the Indian citizens, there are some restrictions in article 19(1)(B).^[6] These restrictions are applicable for our press and audio-visual media also. But there is no hard & fast rule for social media as it cannot be bound by the borders of a country and this platform is very much new still today. People, who cannot express their feelings via old platform of press are easily expressing on Facebook, twitter or Whatsapp by sharing thoughts, pictures and videos. For this, the, ethical violations, those are taking place can be understood by some examples:

- a) Very recently we have experienced some group violence in various parts of the country. Often those turned into communal clashes. While a communal clash was going on at Bashirhat sub-division of North 24 PGS district in WB, a group of people unethically provoked people by sharing some pictures and clippings of some Bhojpuri, Tamil or Telugu movies or sharing some pictures of a massive communal riot that took place in another state of India 15 years ago.
- b) A particular group of people of some religion spreading their concept of religion in such fabricated way that people are getting doubtful about what the actual concept is.
- c) As there is no hard & fast rule for social media, therefore it is easy to express anti national feelings and thoughts on social networking sites.

Recently cyber law of India has been updated and the unethical users have been convicted in recent cases.

ii/ Account Privacy:

As social networking sites contain personal data, it is always a subject of concern for the issues of privacy. There are some unethical hackers who will hack your profile and steal your data, private pictures and other virtual wealth. Although before registering into the social sites there are specific terms and conditions that the user has to agree. But most of the people violate the terms and conditions and create fake profiles by stealing other's photos or using pictures downloaded from various search engines. Various links are shared on Facebook or sent via messenger who displays some lucrative offers or provocative pictures and videos. In most of the cases these links are sent by the hackers. Whenever you click on the link, your profile gets hacked and the hackers can see and use your data as they wish. Besides this, there is a serious issue about Facebook is, the pictures those have been uploaded on Facebook are not safe. One can easily download your pictures and create a fake profile which looks very much genuine. Before Facebook, there was a site called Orkut. The personal messages were open and everyone could see those. Facebook is a little more protective than that. One of the major disadvantages of Facebook is, whenever you want to delete your account, you cannot do that. You can deactivate your account, but can't delete. A large number of people, who deactivate their accounts on Facebook, do this due to their data security issue.

In Gmail inbox, often you get a mail that you have been selected as the winner of lottery competition by some multinational company. They ask you to deposit an amount into their account. As they ask you to deposit, you do the same, and, since the next moment they stops every communication with you. Many of us were victimized by these fraudulent. Now the question arises, where from they get your contact number and communication address? Here lie the loopholes of the security of these social networking sites. When you use a smart phone with

your Global Positioning System (GPS) turned on, sites like Facebook or applications like messenger shows your location to others. Those who use social networking sites in unethical way will surely take advantage of that.

iii/ False Business Communication:

While we surf Facebook, we may have noticed that there are various pages and advertisements of different organizations claiming and convincing people about their business. Such ads often come at the notification bar that some company is selling a pack of 3 shirts just for 699!! All the shirts are made from high quality linen. When you click on the ad, the link will transfer you from Facebook to an unknown page of that site, which you never heard before. There you will find more samples like that. As all the products look very much attractive you buy one of those. When the shirt reaches you via some courier you find that the shirts are very poor in quality and small in size. This is just an example. You will find ads and pages of catering services, travel agencies, cloths and accessories and many more. Probably this is the greatest disadvantage of window shopping. When you directly buy from the shops the chances of unethical communications becomes lower. But, when you shop from these sites the percentage of unethical communication gets higher.

iv/ Hacking the Identity:

It is very much easy to hack someone's identity on the social sites like Facebook. They can hack you in different ways:

A/The Hacker may send you an unknown link which may provoke you sexually or financially. Getting provoked by the message of the link you click that link and all the data of your Facebook or even from the smartphone may be theft by the hackers. You can even lose your money if you save all the details of your debit or credit card in the phone.

B/ If someone want to malign you they will download all your picture from Facebook account to his phone or computer and will simply open another account by your name and spread wrong messages.

C/The hacker may download your pictures and open a fake account.

Although there is a privacy setting on Facebook, still most of us like to keep our account open for the visitors. There is a reporting option on Facebook. Fake accounts can easily been reported though. But the unethical users are more active from us.

The Paradigm Shift:

Basically a paradigm is a particular framework in which all the consequences of a particular phenomenon take place. In the paradigm of communications without the virtual world and social media, the percentage of unethical communication, unethical business communication and unethical political communication were low.

But in the framework of social media communication the percentage of all types of unethical communication is much higher. According to CNN in the year of 2012, total 83 million accounts of Facebook are false and duplicate.^[7] It has surely increased in next 5 years. Although the paradigm has shifted. We feel more comfortable in Facebook rather talking face to face; the practice of unethical communication has increased. In Facebook we often intend to show the world more than what we are.

Conclusion:

The following steps can be taken to prevent the unethical communication on the social sites:

*/ to improve the privacy settings and aware people about the need of the privacy.

*/ provide an automatic shield to the pictures and videos uploaded in Facebook. At least update some features so that pictures can't be downloaded. (This is the key feature which instagram provides)

*/ provide a filter so that the content can be checked properly before upload.

*/ last, but, most importantly, link any of the valid identity card of the user with the user's account.

Unethical communication is the common practice of all time. The main question is whether it increasing or not. A proper and rapid plan should be carefully designed and implemented to decrease the percentage of the unethical communication.

Citation List:

1/ (n.d.). Retrieved July 16, 2017, from <http://dcarballo0.tripod.com/commtheory/nm/index.htm>

2/ S. (2015, September 18). Opportunity Gate-crashes! Retrieved July 17, 2017, from <http://jobjump.blogspot.in/2015/09/birla-sun-life-focused-equity-fund.html>

3/ (n.d.). Retrieved July 17, 2017, from <http://www.communicationethics.net/values/>

4/ Press Release: ITU releases 2016 ICT figures ... (n.d.). Retrieved July 17, 2017, from <http://www.itu.int/en/mediacentre/Pages/2016-PR30.aspx>

5/ Dailymail.com, M. D. (2015, August 11). Why you should NEVER put your phone number on Facebook: Setting means anyone can find you using your digits. Retrieved July 18, 2017, from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-3192543/Why-NEVER-phone-number-Facebook-profile.html>

6/ Article 19(1)(a). (2013, March 21). Retrieved July 18, 2017, from <http://indiaopines.com/article-19-1a/>

7/ Kelly, H. (2012, August 03). 83 million Facebook accounts are fakes and dupes. Retrieved July 19, 2017, from <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/08/02/tech/social-media/facebook-fake-accounts/index.html>

Selected References:

Books:

- Johannesen, R. L., Valde, K. S., &Whedbee, K. E. (2008). *Ethics in human communication*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press.
- Japp, P. M. (2005). *Communication ethics, media, & popular culture*. New York, NY: Lang.
- Christians, C. G., &Traber, M. (1997). *Communication ethics and universal values*. London: Sage.

Links:

- Social media posts trigger seven communal riots in a month in West Bengal. (n.d.). Retrieved July 18, 2017, from <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/social-media-posts-trigger-seven-communal-riots-in-a-month-in-west-bengal/articleshow/59496771.cms>.

- Religious violence in India. (2017, August 31). Retrieved July 18, 2017, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_violence_in_India
- Data leakage in social media. (n.d.). Retrieved July 19, 2017, from http://blog.isc2.org/isc2_blog/2012/05/data-leakage-in-social-media.html
- InformationWeek News Connects The Business Technology Community. (n.d.). Retrieved July 20, 2017, from <https://www.informationweek.com/>
- (n.d.). Retrieved July 21, 2017, from <http://www.communicationethics.net/home/index.php>
- Harris, J. (n.d.). Ethical Issues in Social Networking. Retrieved July 20, 2017, from <https://cariblogger.com/ethical-issues-in-social-networking/>