

Part I

Social Media in Convergence

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Understanding Social Media and Social Behavior Change

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- 1 Explain how social media has been able to transform audiences into more participatory, globalized and civically engaged users by changing the ways in which they gather, interact with, and disseminate information.
- 2 Distinguish between audience assumptions in historic linear mass communication models and social media transactional processes.
- 3 Understand the role of behavior change theory in the marketing process.

Introduction

Digital natives, or individuals who have been born and raised in a digital world, are often referred to as alien outliers to society (Bauerlein, 2009; Palfrey & Gasser, 2010). In 2009, Professor Mark Bauerlein released the book *The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future (Or, Don't Trust Anyone Under 30)*, and posits the millennial generation (i.e., individuals born between 1982 and 2002) as less informed and knowledgeable than previous generations due to their constant use and interaction with digital technologies. The book condemns millennials for their disinterest in reading print books, erosion of basic grammar skills, lack of memory recall ability,

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and a fascination with distributing mundane status updates through social networking sites.

While Bauerlein's criticisms suggest that technology is detrimental to the future of society, the purpose of this book, *Strategic Social Media: From Marketing to Social Change*, is to offer a different position. Undoubtedly millennials, just like previous generations, are different from their predecessors. They think and process information differently and prefer multiple streams of information with frequent interaction with content (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005; Prensky, 2001). Perhaps one reason why we speak about digital natives as alien and unlike previous generations is due to the unmatched potential that they hold in shaping the world for the better (Palfrey & Gasser, 2010).

The authors of this book believe that technology creates better-informed and more knowledgeable citizens of society, leading towards greater opportunity for positive social change than ever before. Specifically, this book hopes to outline the underlying communication strategies that inspire behavior change in social media audiences, whether that behavior change is intended to inspire business decisions or positive social changes. Additionally, under the guidance of related communication theories, this book aims to show readers how to develop social media marketing messages.

Individuals today have more frequent interaction with information about a wider range of issues, making them more engaged with events happening around the world. Many are concerned about the negative influence social media has on our youngest generations. However, each era of new media comes with a strong and vocal wave of fear and resistance. While it is possible to inspire behavior change through media, new technologies are not inherently good or evil. Take a look at the following items. Which are examples of new media?

- (a) The Internet during the late twentieth century
- (b) Magazines during the colonial era
- (c) Paperback books during World War II
- (d) All of the above.

The answer is (d) All of the above.

The definition of what new media includes is perpetually changing. To say that one generation's media use is better than another is ill-informed. Most often, individuals fear the unfamiliar and unknown when it comes to technology. With adults spending more than 8.5 hours per day in front of screens (Zackon, 2009), it is only natural to question what type of influence media has on everyday lives. However, this reflection must consider the complicated process of igniting behavior change through media content.

Years of communication research have taught us that the cause-and-effect process is not as simple as previously thought. The media is often identified as the cause for negative behavior, whether it is making us more violent, obese, or over-sexualized members of society. However, the process of audience behavior change is far more complicated than a direct media effects model suggests. It is easier to blankly assume that because person A consumed media B that they were led towards behavior C. These types of causal relationships seem justified, especially when the media message in question is something unfamiliar or

scary. However, this type of assumption is sometimes referred to as “hypodermic-needle theory” (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007), and is an outdated notion of how media directly influences behavior through a linear cause-and-effect process. A strong understanding of behavior change research outlined in this chapter will help illustrate this process.

Social media is defined as a group of Internet-based applications built on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). It is right to turn to social media when attempting to inspire behavior change in audiences through media messages. The user-generated profile feature of social media is the closest connection many media producers will ever have to the individual personality of an audience member. Social media does not fundamentally change the ways in which audiences make decisions about their everyday actions, but simply maximizes the opportunity for marketers to reach and interact with consumers. This book therefore investigates how individuals turn to social media as a space to create and recreate personal and perceived identities, thus helping social media marketers understand how social media tools are used by their audiences and how to inspire behavior change through social media content.

Many alternative social media references teach users the specifics about how to use various platforms. They share information about how Facebook status updates are different than Twitter posts. However, the authors of this book believe that it is more useful for marketers to have a strong understanding of how social media is able to inspire human behavior change than it is to know about platform-specific tools. Rather than constantly looking ahead at what is new or trendy in social media, it is more practical to learn about how humans make decisions based on their own life experiences, including media content consumption. Marketers can then use this knowledge to develop social media strategies through whatever social media platform they choose or emerge as the next trendy platform in the future.

Through an understanding of foundational communication theories, one will be able to apply the tools of behavior change to any past, present or future social media platform. It is better to understand the link between media and behavior change than it is to know the differences between platform interfaces. By the end of this book, it should be clear that regardless of your goal as a social media strategist, whether it is for social media marketing, personal social media use, or creating large-scale social change campaigns, the process through which audiences are inspired towards permanent behavior change is the same.

Thus, the authors believe that rather than viewing digital natives as *The Dumbest Generation*, a bridge must be built between traditional communication theories and social media practitioners. This will help individuals utilize technologies to meet their goals. This chapter aims to discuss how social media has been able to push individuals towards more participatory, globalized, and civically engaged spaces by changing the ways in which users gather and disseminate information (Castells, 2001; Scheufele, 2002; Jenkins, 2006; Levine, 2007). While this chapter provides a substantial overview of communication theories, future chapters will help guide readers towards developing specific social media strategies, and thus illustrating the promising opportunities brought by social media.

Bridging Communication Theories and Social Media Practitioners

This chapter provides a basic communication theoretical framework for individuals looking to advance their career through the effective creation and dissemination of social media messages. One basic definition states that communication is “who says what to whom and with what effect” (Lasswell, 1948; Griffin, 2011). This definition of communication intrinsically links the construct to persuasion. Whether it be the source of the message (who), the content of the message (what) or audience characteristics (whom), the process of communication is all about behavior change (Griffin, 2011). Understanding human behavior is one of the most crucial things that social media communication specialists need to learn before developing successful social media marketing campaigns.

Because this book is interested in constructing social media messages, it will mostly examine the communication process through the mass communication paradigm. Traditional models of mass communication were long thought of as a “*one-to-many*” model, where one message was crafted to appeal to as many people as possible, and broadcast through a mass medium to reach a large audience. Here, mass communication is able to disseminate a single message multiple times in a much more efficient manner than any other type of communication (Dominick, 2008). Mass media audiences were seen as homogeneous, individually anonymous and geographically dispersed. With a simple click of a button, an advertisement could be broadcast to the masses in print, over the radio or on television. However, just like the other types of communication, scholars and communication specialists quickly learned that this top-down linear model that posits one individual as a sender of a communication message and another as a receiver was not the most effective at persuading audiences.

A more nuanced outlook of the role that audiences play in the mass communication reception process proved necessary. Persuasive communication models began to integrate the interaction between senders and receivers of messages. These range from linear models of communication, where information is transferred from the sender to the receiver in a step-by-step process, to a more transactional process where the information exchange is fluid and takes participation from both sides. It is important to understand the differences between these models in order to best persuade audiences towards desired behavior change outcomes via social media messages.

Linear Communication Models to Modern Transactional Processes

Theoretically, our understanding of communication models has gone through great transformations over the past 100 years. This chapter suggests that these transformations and trends are a guide for emerging communication contexts, specifically those in the digital and social age. The 1947 *Shannon–Weaver model of communication* (Figure 1.1) is used as the foundation for much of our knowledge of communication today. It highlights many important takeaways for effective communication. The model identifies eight concepts as

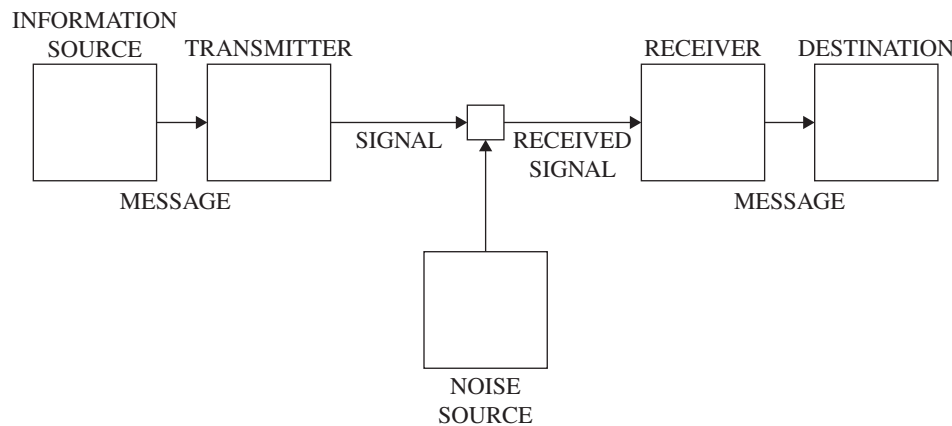


Figure 1.1 Shannon–Weaver model of communication. Source: Shannon, 1948. Reproduced with permission of The Bell System Technical Journal.

key elements for information transfer: source, encoder, message, channel, decoder, receiver, noise, and feedback.

In this model, shared meaning is imperative for effective communication. Most importantly, it provides an explanation for miscommunication. The receiver of a message could walk away without the intended message not only due to external noise, but also due to the encoding and decoding process. This applies to social media conversations as well.

For example, a friend may write a message on your Facebook wall. Your friend knows that the wall is a public space where others are likely to see the message. She wishes to be discreet about the meaning of her message, so she uses personal jokes and acronyms in her message, rather than being forthcoming. The message is so secretive that even you, the intended receiver, don't understand the meaning of the message. In this example, there was no external noise to cause the miscommunication; the technology worked appropriately and there was no language barrier between sender and receiver. However, the encoding and decoding process did not align, thus resulting in miscommunication. This is one of the first models of communication that included an explanation for why miscommunication occurs even without external noise.

Regardless of the foundational importance of the Shannon–Weaver model of communication, researchers came to realize that the process of communication is much more transactional in nature than the Shannon–Weaver model illustrates. Rather than communicating through a linear process, which posits one individual as a sender of a communication message and another as a receiver, a *transactional model of communication* (Figure 1.2) accounts for all participants as senders/receivers in a simultaneous and fluid exchange.

The quality of this exchange depends on the ability and willingness of communicators to gather necessary information and disseminate in an appropriate manner for the target audience. While one individual is speaking, the other communicator is providing simultaneous

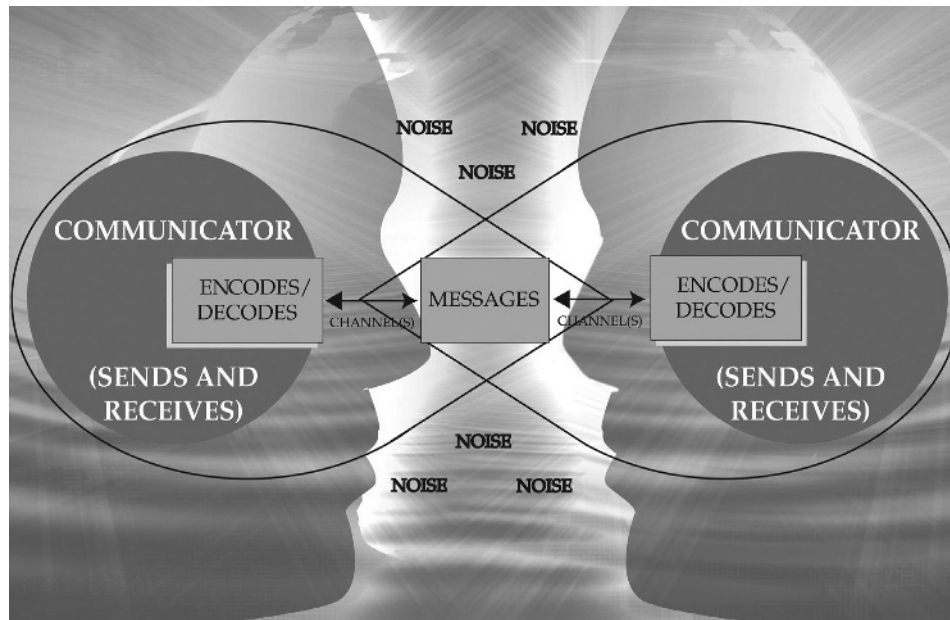


Figure 1.2 Transactional model of communication. Source: Reproduced with permission of the National Communication Association.

feedback through nonverbal cues, relational history, and the setting of the communication exchange. People constantly shape their communication patterns based on real-time events in the communication environment.

While the linear model of communication gives limited power to the receiver of the message, the transactional model equalizes their role, as communication can only take place when the two meet on an agreed-upon meaning. In the example above, the subtle Facebook message causes miscommunication between the sender and the receiver of the message. However, you don't just examine Facebook wall posts as a singular communication process. You consider the relational history with the person who constructs them, the time of day that the message was posted, and the technology through which the message was constructed. Maybe you see that the message was posted through your friend's new iPhone and assume that the autocorrect spelling function of the new technology made the message unreadable. Each of these pieces of information influence how you interpret the message and are just as vital to the communication process as your friend's intended meaning.

Regardless of the communication process, whether it be communication between two friends, a public address in front of hundreds, or a 140-character tweet, the better message is able to account for this gathering and dissemination process, the more effective the message becomes. Through this transactional lens, a more inclusive view of communication studies emerges. This leads us to our first action plan for social media communication strategists. Each chapter will include a similar action plan to help you apply concepts to real-life marketing strategies.

Transactional Communication Action Plan

There are three steps towards maximizing communication between the sender and receiver of social media messages.

- 1 Be certain that you are not just creating social media messages based on your own goals and objectives.
- 2 Determine who the members of the target are, the technologies that they utilize, and their own needs and gratifications.
- 3 Identify any barriers to an effective communication process, such as competence, access or complicated relational history.

Your friend's decision to write a subtle message on your Facebook wall was based on her or his own predetermined objectives. The message contained private content, and despite Facebook being a more public forum, it was chosen as the medium for dissemination. Rather than considering the message target, technology options and the audience decoding process, your friend only considered ways in which the message could be altered for his or her own purposes. Instead, she should have chosen a more appropriate medium where the message could have been more forthcoming and easier to interpret, such as a private mobile messaging application, like Snapchat.

Now that you understand the differences between linear and transactional models of communication, it is important to take a deeper look at the ways in which the human decision-making processes influence marketing. Social media technologies have made it more important than ever to understand how audiences make sense of media messages. This information exchange navigates the items we purchase, the groups we join, and the recommendations we share with friends. Human behavior change is an essential area of study for anyone who is interested in marketing.

Marketing and Behavior Change Theory

The American Marketing Association defines *marketing* as the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large (American Marketing Association, 2013). The definition is intrinsically linked with marketing research, which helps connect customers to the market through monitoring and evaluation efforts. Ultimately, marketing practitioners are responsible for designing and implementing a strategic plan in order to reach specific objectives. Marketing, advertising, public relations, and branding all fall under the broader umbrella of strategic communication. In today's ever-changing digital landscape, a strategic communication vision is more vital than ever to a company's brand (Howard, 2012).

Behavior change communication is an evidence- and research-based process of using communication to promote certain predetermined behaviors through an appropriate mix of

interpersonal, group and mass media channels (Manoff Group, 2012). Traditionally, behavior change theories have been utilized to develop public health interventions. The hope is that through strategic mass media dissemination, pro-social messages are able to prompt human behavior change so that individuals may engage in more positive and healthier lifestyles. These messages are important to the safety and well-being of mass audiences. Mass media provides the most efficient and cost-effective means for dissemination. However, the messages do not always prove the most persuasive. Often, these messages are up against hundreds of years of cultural rituals and practices that prove antagonistic to their health goals. While inciting this type of permanent behavior change in lifestyle can prove very difficult to achieve, this area of research has made great strides in our understanding of how to best persuade human behavior through mass media messages.

It wasn't until the early 1970s that marketers began using human behavior change theories to explore how to influence consumer behavior through mass media messages. Before this time, the focus was on the product and brand itself. Very little research went into the preference and lifestyle of target audiences. *Social marketing* emerged as a systematic way to design, implement, and control programs that are calculated to influence the acceptability of social ideas, including product planning, pricing, communication, distribution and marketing (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971). Here, marketers began to see that it was much more effective to sell an idea and lifestyle, rather than a product.

Since the inception of social marketing, several alternative frameworks have been offered. Researchers have explored the possibilities for persuasion through target audiences, a change in mind-set process, and a more planning-centered approach (Thackeray & Neiger, 2000). Each of these approaches offers unique challenges and benefits for using mass media to influence human purchasing behavior. However, they all take into account the transactional role that audiences play in the communication process. Rather than focusing solely on the product or the media message, marketers have begun to realize the potential of considering audience lifestyle and preferences as a central ingredient to behavior change.

Social marketing and behavior change theory are complementary methods for understanding how consumers make purchasing decisions (Thackeray & Neiger, 2000). The best approach to marketing is a hybrid process. Strong media messages are able to influence human behavior, but only if they speak to the goals and experiences of their audiences. Consumers have their own preferences and life experience, and the more that they are able to identify with media messages, the stronger that the message will speak to them. Though the media is able to reach a mass audience, audiences don't like being seen as a member of a larger homogeneous crowd. The efficient and cost-effective nature of disseminating messages through mass media was making the content less individualized, thus proving less persuasive. Social media has made it easier than ever for marketers to integrate these two approaches.

It is the role of marketers to ensure that consumer behavior is positively reinforced at every point of engagement. As the marketplace grows with new products, brands and services, it is essential to the survival of businesses to have a steady core of loyal customers. In fact, the industry named this cognitive procedure *shaping*, where the product is seen as a positive or negative reinforcer to the consumer purchasing behavior (Rothschild & Gaidis, 1981). It is the goal of marketing to ensure that purchasing is positively reinforced at every stage, including in retail stores, as well as its consumption at home.

Shaping procedures are used so that consumer purchasing trials become more than a random process. Rather than ensuring that customers choose your product or service when faced with the endless options available in a global marketplace, marketers hope to shape consumers so that there is no question as to which product they purchase in the future. This helps marketers rely on a sale before consumers ever walk into a store. Consumption is much more than a one-time transaction. Shaping leads to long-term patterns of consumer behavior.

For a long time, it has been difficult to track longitudinal patterns of consumer behaviors and consumption. Traditional market research, such as surveys and focus groups, were unable to capture audience data over time. However, advances in technologies, such as customer loyalty reward cards, credit history and scanner data, have made long-term tracking easier. While these are effective ways to understand the history of products customers buy, this book argues that social media technology is the most important tool for marketers to use when interested in shaping consumer behavior.

The use of social media for transactional communication with audiences is critical to any marketing practitioner. Today, 46% of online users turn to social media when making purchasing decisions (Karr, 2014). Research has found that social media increases brand recognition and customer loyalty, generates greater exposure for business, increases audience traffic, improves search ratings, results in new business partnerships, reduces marketing expenses, and yields a higher conversation rate (Stelzner, 2011; DeMers, 2014). Rather than secretly tracking purchasing behavior with technology, social media allows marketers to engage directly with audiences through an open transactional process. This is especially useful as customer concerns for privacy and data security increase.

Companies are now able to utilize numerous platforms to engage customers, including company websites, blogs, discussion forums, email, Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest. While it is important for marketers to reach out to their customers, it is equally important for sales and customers to be able to communicate with one another via social media (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). This develops a strong community among members, a concept discussed in detail in Chapter 3. Social media provides an ideal way to communicate with customers without disrupting their everyday rituals.

Once transactional communication is in progress, and consumers are shaped by positive social media reinforcement, they are more likely to return for repeat business. The positive reinforcement no longer just comes in the form of purchasing or product experience. Social media allows marketers the ability to check-in, monitor, and listen to audiences at every step of the consumption process, including the period of time before they ever make a purchase and long after they bring it home. Social media can prompt consumers to think about a product or brand when they otherwise would not.

For example, as a consumer, you may put great thought into a purchase of a new pair of athletic shoes. There are a lot of competing brands to choose from. You may examine consumer blogs or reviews to determine which pair best suits your particular lifestyle. Maybe you will use it primarily for walking, and it is something that you may use fairly regularly in your daily life. Social media helps guide your decision based on your particular lifestyle and price point, helping to personalize the consumption process to suit your individual needs.

Once the purchase is made and you wear the shoes a few times, you are likely not to think about them very often. This is what consumers want in a product. If the shoe is meeting the purchase goals, it becomes a part of your daily routine and habit. The only time you are likely to consider the shoe purchase again is if something goes wrong and the experience is negatively reinforced, such as the sole wearing thin and the shoe hurting your foot.

This is an unfortunate challenge faced by marketers in the consumption process. How can repeat brand loyalty be encouraged when customers only buy new products because their previous purchase no longer meets their needs? Social media allows the opportunity for marketers to build a relationship with consumers during that critical time period when the product is working well for consumers. Marketing practitioners can ask customers to share pictures of the purchase, provide information about local hiking trails, or offer exclusive promotions for being such a good customer. All of these help to positively reinforce, or shape the way consumers feel about their purchase. In fact, it makes it easier for transactional dialogue at every point along the consumption process: before, during and after the sale. That way, consumers are thinking about your brand when their experiences are positive.

Humans have always exhibited markedly habitual behavior with regard to their marketing decisions. We tend to buy the same brand of products, eat similar types of food, and go to the same stores when shopping. We even tend to spend the same amount of time and money in stores each visit. Knowledge of these patterns of human behavior can prove very lucrative for marketers. This information is missed when marketers only focus on media messages and products. Social media provides new opportunities for getting to know your consumers on a much more intimate level.

Generally, *consumer habits* are a form of automaticity that is guided by past experiences (Wood & Neal, 2009). This is why shaping is so essential to repeat business. Repetition is central to all facets of human life, including our daily media consumption. Humans tend to have a limited *media repertoire*, or the entirety of media channels that a person regularly uses (Hasebrink & Domeyer, 2012). Though a larger supply of media content from multiple media sources exists, your consumers tend to only use a very limited number of media sources in their everyday lives. The notion that millennials have all of the information in the world at their fingertips is true. However, they tend to only visit their favorite websites on a routine basis. This helps to organize all this information, but also drastically decreases the amount and type of content received.

Repetition is also an important facet of consumer purchasing. It helps ease the uncertainty of such a saturated marketplace. In fact, the more bogged down individuals feel by time pressures, distraction and self-control depletion, the more heavily they rely on routines (Hasebrink & Domeyer, 2012). This proves true of our consumption rituals and mass media routines. Often, these are the very same negative moods and attitudes that guide media-seeking behavior. If you are feeling stressed out or bogged down at work, you may be more likely to come home and watch hours of television to relax. Repetition helps ease stress in our everyday lives.

In order to break consumer habits, mindful decisions must be made by audiences that interfere with their current routines. Communication theory tells us that it can be very difficult to change the daily routines of individuals. The theory of *cognitive dissonance* helps to explain the discomfort that individuals experience when they are confronted by new

information that is contradictory to their current beliefs, attitudes and ideas (Festinger, 1962). Humans do not like their daily repertoires disrupted.

When met with media messages that are not consistent with current practices, audiences use communication to make things more consistent and reduce dissonance. Humans strive for internal consistency. Dissonance reduction is achieved in one of four ways: (i) to change the behavior or cognition; (ii) justify the behavior by changing the conflicting cognition; (iii) justify the behavior or cognition by adding new cognitions; or (iv) deny any information that conflicts with existing beliefs.

Let's assume that you read a media message that states a new brand of athletic shoes recently introduced to the market is better than the one that you just purchased. You have already invested substantial time researching social media prior to your purchase to determine which brand would be best for your lifestyle. However, this new information is not consistent with your purchasing decision.

There are many ways that you may try to reduce the dissonance that this new media message brings. You may decide that you will no longer purchase the brand of shoes that you just bought, justify all of the money that you saved by buying a pair of lesser quality shoes, or decide that the new shoes are probably not better at all and are just a new fad that will go away. All these are ways that you communicate to make things more consistent with your previous behavior.

The cognitive dissonance process often leads individuals avoiding or ignoring situations and information that are likely to increase dissonance. This helps to explain why consumers ignore so much of traditional media marketing. Because of a limited media repertoire, it is unlikely that consumers actually receive these media messages unless they are being broadcast on media platforms that audiences are already visiting as part of their daily routine. This is especially true now that media users are able to fast-forward or skip commercials/advertisements all together.

Social media provides a space where marketers and consumers coexist. It allows marketers to focus their attention on customers who are already interested in their behavior and would be more impacted by media messages that are consistent with their current cognitions.

Based on this understanding of human behavior, it is clear that marketers need to consider behavior change theory when developing a social media marketing strategy. This book will help practitioners understand how to best research audiences to craft social media messages, choose an appropriate social media platform, and monitor the resulting information exchange. Moreover, it encourages the social media strategy to fit within a larger marketing campaign to reach product goals. This will help transform customers into lifelong brand advocates.

While the majority of the book focuses on crafting social media messages for marketing purposes, Part IV explains why it is a smart idea to use social media to market for social good. This is consistent with the roots of behavior change theories. A more socially conscious brand strategy can prove mutually beneficial for businesses, audiences, and the globalized world alike. Now that we understand the benefits of using behavior change theory in marketing strategies, let's examine a case study of a start-up company that provides audiences with an alternative marketing narrative to fight dissonance with a habitual consumer behavior.

Case Study: Warby Parker

In 2010, classmates at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, Neil Blumenthal, Andrew Hunt, David Gilboa, and Jeffrey Raider, were dissatisfied with the options available for individuals in need of prescription eyeglasses. Costs of lenses and frames were high; eye doctors require advance appointments; and travel to showrooms to try on frames can be far, especially for rural consumers. The traditional way of doing business was not working for everyone in the marketplace. While it can be difficult to change the behavior of customers who are used to purchasing a certain way, the classmates decided to try to disrupt the market with an innovative strategy. Through a small \$2500 program seed investment, the classmates launched Warby Parker, a new brand and way of selling prescription eyeglasses and sunglasses (Warby Parker, 2015).

Warby Parker is not like other eyeglass retailers. Their business model focuses on online distribution, rather than showrooms that sell outside manufacturer merchandise. By designing glasses in-house, and selling only directly to consumers, the company is able to drastically lower the purchasing cost of glasses. This alternative way of buying and selling eyeglasses was new to the marketplace, and initially audiences may have felt great dissonance. They may have believed that eyeglasses were too important a purchase to make online, or that the cost of frames was so low because the quality wasn't great. The company was able to effectively utilize social media to communicate with customers, change these narratives, reduce the dissonance, and eventually capture their loyalty. Today, Warby Parker has shipped more than 500,000 pairs of glasses in and employs over 100 people.

Individuals may have been concerned with purchasing eyeglasses through an online distribution because they would not be able to walk into a showroom and try on frames as at a traditional retailer. To mitigate these concerns, Warby Parker developed a "Home Try-On Campaign" where consumers are able to order five pairs of glasses online, which are shipped to the customer's home to try on at no charge. Consumers are then able to pick the pair that best suits them and return the remaining pairs at no charge. Beyond this remote business transaction, Warby Parker uses technology to engage the customers to make this exchange feel like a more personalized experience.

Warby Parker encourages transactional communication by consistently communicating with, and responding to, customer comments on their social media platforms. They regularly prompt customers to participate with user-generated content by asking them to post pictures of themselves wearing the glasses on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. The Home Try-On Campaign encourages customers to share the purchase with their personal social networks. This communication with individuals that consumers already know and trust likely helps to reduce customer dissonance with the new product. In fact, customers who post photos of themselves in frames are buying at twice the rate of those who don't (Shandrow, 2013).

The company also uses social media to provide information that consumers are searching. In addition to the Home Try-On Campaign, social media is used to offer expert advice on eyeglasses. The company creates informative YouTube videos and asks fans to do the same (Tobin, 2013). Rather than just creating media messages based on the goals and objectives of selling eyeglasses, the company has directed attention towards the challenges consumers have with the traditional eyeglass market. This direct communication creates meaningful and personalized transactional communication that leads to brand loyalty (Shandrow, 2013).

Furthermore, Warby Parker has included marketing for social good in their business strategy. By teaming up with the company VisionSpring, the company is able to provide a pair of eyeglasses for a person in need for every pair of Warby Parker glasses that a consumer purchases. To date, Warby Parker has given away 500,000 pairs of glasses. This socially conscious business strategy makes people feel good about changing their purchasing habits. It has proven a mutually beneficial strategy for the Warby Parker business, its audiences in need of eyeglasses, and the globalized world alike.

Here you see how social media provides an opportunity for businesses to reach out to potential customers and provide an alternative narrative for reducing dissonance. Even if a new customer is skeptical about the business model, the free shipping and Home Try-On Campaign limits the risk. Social media is also used to prompt users to share their positive experiences with friends. Not only does this become a part of their new schemata of interpretation, it allows new customers to hear about the product through an already trusted source, rather than through a business's self-promotion. This is just one example of how social media helped a new business to disrupt a traditional marketplace. Each chapter of this book will explore additional case studies where social media helped in reaching business goals.

Discussion questions

- 1 How does social media technology aid Warby Parker's alternative business model for selling prescription eyeglasses? What challenges would the company have faced in a traditional media environment?
- 2 How is Warby Parker using social media to promote transactional communication with customers, rather than more linear advertising? What role does user-generated content play in this process?
- 3 What elements of Warby Parker's social media marketing strategy help reduce dissonance for consumers that are considering switching eyeglass brands? How does the socially conscious business strategy help provide an alternative narrative that they can share with their social network?

Summary

There is much to learn about how we utilize new media to make decisions in our daily lives. It also remains unclear exactly how we interact with and are affected by media texts. Throughout this chapter, we have discussed the complexities of this process and identified the role that audiences play. Most importantly, we have learned how mass communication is no longer viewed as a vehicle for “one-to-many” messages. Selective targeted messages are most effective in establishing behavior change no matter which type of communication specialty you are interested in engaging. This shift from viewing a mass audience to targeting individuals is essential to successful social media marketing.

Because of social media, audiences are now seeing themselves as generators of content, rather than passive receivers of media texts. Businesses need to personalize content and allow room for participation. People are no longer shocked when a website addresses them by their first name, and it will not be long, if we have not reached the point already, where this level of individuality and customization is expected. Social media makes it easier than ever to encourage this type of transactional communication. It is an efficient and cost-effective way to reach your business objectives, as well as the goals of your audiences.

Social media has brought forth new opportunities for information gathering, dissemination and socialization. However, these new technologies have not completely altered our purposes for doing so. The tools for behavior change are the same, and once you understand the theoretical underpinnings, you will be better equipped to create and disseminate efficient and effective messages for your social media campaigns. This chapter has presented the first rule of an effective social media marketing strategy: stop thinking about communication in a linear fashion. Ask questions about the interests of your target audience, rather than wondering how to get media messages to reach the largest number of people possible.

This book is interested in guiding strategy for producers of social media messages that inspire behavior change in audiences. This chapter has laid the foundation for how communication theories approached audience behavior change in the past. Hopefully, a stronger understanding of the complexities of the relationship between media content and subsequent behavior change has been gained.

Through the use of behavior change theory, marketers are able to create media messages that meet the goals and experiences of their audiences. Through a mindful strategy, consumer behavior can be positively reinforced at every point of engagement. This will reduce dissonance in the behavior change and result in more loyal and long-term brand advocates. These customers will then influence their own social network to continue increasing your return on investment.

Today, an entire generation has grown up utilizing new media technologies, but has never taken the time to examine their influence critically in order to maximize its potential. A strong practitioner is the one who is able to apply technological competence and critical thinking skills to a long-term strategic plan. The following chapters will examine historical shifts in behavior change literature and the opportunities and challenges of information diffusion, community and mobilization. These three constructs will become the core of your social media strategy, and will set you apart from other social media experts in the field.

Key Takeaways

- 1 Communication theories help teach social media communication specialists how to gather necessary information, package it towards a specific target audience, and disseminate it through an appropriate medium.
- 2 Our understanding of the communication process has shifted from a linear model towards a more transactional process that accounts for all participants as senders/receivers in a simultaneous and fluid exchange. Determine who the target of the message is, the technology that they utilize, and their needs and gratifications.
- 3 Marketers are turning towards behavior change theory to better understand the lifestyle and experiences of consumers. This focus on consumer behavior helps transform customers into lifetime brand advocates.
- 4 Social media should be used to engage in dialogue to help build relationships with customers. This positive reinforcement will keep them coming back.
- 5 Humans exhibit markedly habitual behaviors. A strong understanding of these routines will help practitioners better construct social media marketing messages that appeal to consumer lifestyle.

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