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Determining the first person to coin the term 'social media' remains an open question. Since its birth in the 1980s and subsequent explosion with the development of Web 2.0 technology in the late 1990s, an advancement which allowed users to connect, interact, and share information, many attempts have been made to explain this major addition to society. The diversity of results, or in other words, the lack of a united, accurate and complete definition of social media has limited its integration with various fields outside its domain. In this article we summarize and introduce some important discussions about this concept so that readers can understand social media's continuous growth and determine which concepts are relevant and how best to use them in their research practice.

1. A definition of social media

Etymology teaches us that 'social' comes from the Latin words 'socialis' which means 'allied' and 'medi' which means 'middle.' In modern parlance, social means relationships within society, including interactions between two people, one person with many people, or between groups of people. Media refers to the tools used to provide and store information, usually in the form of text, images, or sound. Examples of older mass media which have a wide distribution include books, magazines, film, radio, as well as an individuals' media, including their physical mail and phone numbers. Media can be categorized two ways. The first would be analog media which is stored in a physical format. The second would be media which is stored in the binary format of 0 and 1. The distinction emphasizes the possibility that binary-encoded media can be stored or transmitted via computers or digital devices and can be disseminated over the internet.(1) Social media in its current usage refers to web-based internet communication and information sharing technologies. However, to

date, there has not been any universal definition of this term. Each researcher approaches the concept from a different perspective. Some researchers focus on one or more aspects related to the meaning of digital technology. These might be user-generated content, information flow in a specific direction, or emphasizing human interaction and an ability to collaborate. This might mean the sharing of common human values through online communication and collaboration, the opportunity to share information in real time, or sometimes is just a focus on popular tools like Facebook and Twitter.

Some other researchers approach the subject from a perspective of the media public and emphasize the possibility of democratizing content. This presents the opportunity to change the position of the media public from receiver to content creator thanks to a collection of web-based broadcasting technologies. Or it can emphasize requirements related to the technical and electronic media-intensive capabilities of participants interacting through online communities. In 2012, America's Health Research Institute introduced a rather specific definition. According to the organization, social media is a collection of websites and web-based systems that allow mass interaction, conversation, and sharing among members of a network. Accordingly, social media has four defining characteristics: 1) user-generated content, 2) community, 3) rapid, wide-spread distribution, and 4) open, two-way dialogue.

In an effort to propose the most general definition of social media in 2015, Caleb Carr and Rebecca Hayes argued that social media are internet-based communication channels in general.⁽²⁾ They are not just web-based because the global network itself, known as the World Wide Web (WWW) is just one of many channels that uses the infrastructure of the internet. In addition, these channels must also meet a number of requirements including: 1) they should give users the opportunity to interact and freely express themselves in real time 2) the interaction is with a large or small audience; and importantly 3) these public groups derive value from the content created by the users, and from the perception of interaction with others - the social nature inherent in the identity of social media.

The term 'social media' should also be distinguished from a number of other terms such as 'web' and 'social network.' First, although the web is built on the infrastructure of the internet and contains a multitude of pages, not all websites are components of social media. Web 1.0 legacy resources only allowed users to view and extract information from the web without sharing or interacting with the content. The Web 2.0 generation is associated with pages that allow the posting of user-generated content such as videos, audio, photos, and personal diaries. Web 2.0 allows users to interact with the web and with other users and has enabled consumers to become content creators. Web 2.0 has been used as a general term for web-enabled applications built around user-generated, including manipulative content. Although Web 2.0 can be seen as the foundation for the development of social media, it is not social media itself. As it stands more new media creators are moving away from web browser tools and assembling their own application software without using the built-in functions of the web.

Second, social networks are only one part of social media. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media can be divided into six groups, each based on their own functions. These are: 1) blogs which are personal diaries and microblogging such as found with Twitter and Tumblr; 2) social networking sites including Facebook and My Space; 3) content communities which include YouTube, Daily, Pinterest, Instagram, Flickr, and Vine; 4) collaborative projects best exemplified by Wikipedia; 5) the virtual game world, exemplified by World of Warcraft; and 6) virtual social worlds with venues such as Second Life and Farmville.(3) According to this classification, social networks are only one component of Internet-based media. Wikipedia is not a social network, but a resource created by a moderated community to facilitate the sharing of encyclopedic knowledge and information. However, this media which uses text, images, music, and recorded speech is created, updated, and maintained by users. Anyone with web access can become a contributor and edit the content. Thus, although it is not a social network, Wikipedia can be considered a type of social media. While this classification system can be seen as a useful starting point for categorizing social media, its continued growth makes it apparent that there will also be a need to evaluate and develop more rational classifications in the future.

While conducting this review, it was found unnecessary to give a general definition of the term 'social media' because the general definition itself limits our ability to acknowledge its constant growth, development, and social influence. Every researcher working with this term needs to understand that there have been many attempts to define it and that they can inherit and develop their new thesis on a suitable, suggestive definition appropriate for a particular study at a particular time. In addition, another issue of no less importance is whether social media should be understood as social communication or social media with an emphasis on the words, 'communication' and 'media'. This will be the premise for our next discussion.

2. Social communication or social media?

The word communication has a Latin root, 'communicare' which means "to share, communicate, impart, or to inform." According to the Oxford Dictionary, communication is "the sending and receiving of information in written or verbal forms or by other means." In reality, its use varies significantly because of the widespread application of its meaning.

For those who study communication, definition of this term can be classified into two groups. The first group views communication as a process in which A sends a message to B and aims to influence B. The second group views communication as a negotiation and exchange of intention where messages, people-in-culture, and 'reality' interact and help shape the production and interpretation of a shared meaning. The purpose of the first group is to identify the stages of a communication cycle and thus facilitate a complete understanding of each stage, including their role and influence on the entire communication cycle. One of the first theorists to define the first group was Harold Dwight Lasswell whose influential model of "Who says what, by what channel, to whom, and with what influence," was introduced in 1948. The second approach is structural and focuses on the relationships between the several elements necessary for the construction of meaning. These elements fall into three basic groups: 1) text, symbols and encoding; 2) the 'reader' of the text, the cultural and social influences that shape the reader and the symbols and codes they use; and 3) perception of an 'objective reality' that exists outside of the reader and the text. It is generated both by the reader and by the text. Some historical progenitor

linguists for the second group were Ferdinand de Saussure, Roland Barthes, Charles Kay Ogden and Ivor Armstrong Richards.

In Vietnamese studies, communication is defined as "a continuous process of exchanging information, ideas, feelings, etc., sharing skills and experiences between two or more people in order to increase mutual understanding and understanding of the surrounding environment, in order to change perceptions, towards adjusting behaviors and attitudes in accordance with the development needs of individuals, groups or the social community in general, ensuring the sustainable development." (4) Thus, it can be seen that media in its contemporary use is inextricably wed to communication. If communication is the process of exchanging information and interpreting messages, media is a tool, a container for the message or even the message itself that needs to be shared, interpreted and responded to in the process. Media if regarded specifically as communication somewhat limits the meaning of communication. In essence communication is a form that can be a direct or indirect social interaction, with inherent social characteristics. Using the compound word 'social media' seems to be unnecessary. However, in Vietnamese, the term 'social media' is used quite commonly with the definition "a new method of communication," or a "new media environment" when referring to online services or Web 2.0. Thus, social media can be understood as a generalization of the "communication process by which messages are shared with other individuals or the public." This is similar to how the term 'mass communication' is a reduction of the statement "the process of communication in which messages are shared through other mass media." Notably, in many studies by Vietnamese scholars, this mass communication is not understood and even opposed to its use by the mainstream press.

In summary, to date there has been no universal definition or unified name for social media, and it is not within the scope of this review that one is intended to be created. Each researcher approaches the concept from a different perspective and also understands it differently. The list of social media will continue to grow. Capturing and predicting the movement, development and social influence of social media in the future is essential. These will continue to be major challenges and significant concerns

for media researchers in the coming years.

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