BOOK REVIEW

Social Media and Society: An Introduction to the Mass Media Landscape

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Social Media and Society: An Introduction to the Mass Media Landscape
Authors: Regina Luttrell and Adrienne A. Wallace
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Social Media and Society: An Introduction to the Mass Media Landscape is an excellent, timely, and straightforward resource for educators, students, and practitioners alike, including those with limited prior social media knowledge and experience.

Structure and Organization

The book has 12 chapters and is divided into three parts: "Social Media Defined, Distinguished, and Delineated," "Communication Contexts for Social Media," and "Suggestions and Advice for Using Social Media." The beginning of each chapter focuses the reader on the main learning objectives and a relevant scenario from the real world and ends with a chapter wrap-up; useful critical-thinking questions and practically-oriented activities that could be implemented inside or outside of the classroom (including online); a list of key concepts; and a list of media sources. The authors also weave relevant theoretical concepts into the book through "In Theory" breakout sections that help readers apply theory to public relations practice in society. All of these thoughtful and practical

details are among the central benefits of this well-researched, visually appealing book and are among what makes this book a clear and effective contribution to the body of public relations education.

Part one, "Social Media Defined, Distinguished, and Delineated," tackles how we define social media today, detailing the elements of Hlavac's (2014) Social Media Pyramid – social networks, news aggregators, passion connections, video connections, thought leaders, and virtual communities in chapter one. This section also examines the "Dark Side" and the opportunities associated with social media. Chapter two on the "Dark Side" covers topics such as deepfakes, cyberbullying, trolling, fake news, privacy, disinformation, and hate speech, while also diving into domestic and foreign legislation related to social media and the negative psychological and physiological effects of social media. The final chapter in part one discusses the positive advantages of social media such as social connections, social support, the building of social capital, and the proliferation of trusted user-generated content. Chapter three covers social media's positive contributions in research, big data, websleuthing, newsgathering, citizen journalism, and stakeholder communications, specifically through engagement. This chapter also includes ten helpful guidelines and recommendations for ethical and responsible personal and professional social media use, including: 1) "Know how the tools work;" 2) "Be aware of your social, geopolitical, and industry environments;" 3) "Evaluate before posting;" 4) "Use social media wisely;" 5) "Decide what is private and then act accordingly;" 6) "Understand the data so you can USE it;" 7) "Ask questions and self-regulate;" 8) "Consider your data collection behavior;" 9) "Don't add to the drama;" and 10) "Take a hard line on the negative side of social media" (Luttrell & Wallace, 2021, pp. 44-46).

Part two, "Communication Contexts for Social Media," discusses traditional and niche media and covers key mass communication theories such as gatekeeping and agenda-setting in chapter four. The remaining chapters in this section – chapters five through ten – explore the role and impact of social media across various public relations sectors, including business (chapter five), crisis (chapter six), sports (chapter seven), politics and civics (chapter eight), health (chapter nine), and entertainment (chapter ten). These chapters feature scene-setting scenarios and commentary involving Warby Parker, the CDC and COVID-19, broadcaster Mike Tirico, the Women's March, #CaravanToCanada and #insulin4all, and Taylor Swift, demonstrating the broad relevance and importance of social media across industries and society.

Part three, "Suggestions and Advice for Using Social Media," provides guidance regarding social media measurement and evaluation (chapter 11) and careers in social media strategy and management (chapter 12). Chapter 11 introduces readers to important concepts like organic media, paid media, vanity metrics, return on investment (ROI), and key performance indicators (KPIs), while differentiating between metrics and analytics. The authors offer details on Google Analytics, YouTube Analytics, Facebook Analytics, LinkedIn Analytics, Twitter Analytics, and Snapchat Analytics, including providing various visual figures from each platform to assist readers with understanding the concepts introduced in the text. Chapter 12 highlights the skills necessary to work in the social media field, which the authors identify as "writing; data, analytics and trend spotting; and creativity, strategy, and planning" (Luttrell & Wallace, 2021, p. 183). The authors note that those who want to be successful in social media careers must be cognizant of trends as social media evolves and they provide readers with some tools that can help them remain up to date on new and emerging developments. The final chapter is resource-

rich, directing readers to a variety of supplemental websites aimed at allowing them to further enhance their professional development and experiential learning in the aforementioned skill areas.

Strengths and Weaknesses

A strength of this book is that it is written in a more informal and conversational manner than many academic works, thus making it user-friendly and enjoyable for students, faculty, and future or current practitioners, including those with limited knowledge of or experience with social media at the outset. Future editions of this book could be improved with chapters on public relations sectors such as technology, hospitality, travel and tourism, lifestyle, beauty, and fashion as social media are integral to these industries. Though this book features some examples from brands like Gucci and CoverGirl, additional standalone chapters on these popular public relations sectors would provide greater depth to an already robust resource. Furthermore, part three could benefit from incorporating content on diversity, equity, and inclusion either as a standalone chapter or by integrating this important topic into the existing chapter frameworks. Additionally, the authors may consider adding more public relations-focused theories in the future.

The authors note that the goal of the book is to, "engage students as consumers and creators of social media by providing a framework for understanding and connection among social media, mass communications, and the impact on society" (Luttrell & Wallace, 2021, p. vii). They have succeeded and I commend their efforts! I recommend this book without hesitation as a required or suggested reading in undergraduate courses such as survey of public relations, introduction to mass media, mass media and society, social media strategy, social media and society, and more. The book can be used in its entirety or adopted for its applicable sections or

chapters, depending on curriculum and pedagogical needs.

References

Hlavac, R. (2014). Social IMC: Social strategies with bottom-line ROI. CreateSpace.