

Buying into Participatory Culture? Critical Media Literacy and Social Media

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Abstract

While a central focus of media literacy 1.0 was teaching and learning about the impact of marketing on children and youth, the new literacies of Web 2.0 have distracted us from this central purpose in favour of focusing on social media in general, and specific social media platforms in particular. We contend that utilitarian and production-oriented exigencies of media literacy 2.0 have displaced core analytical assumptions of media literacy 1.0 and this chapter is an attempt to resolve this divide. To facilitate a critical media literacy approach to social media, we propose a framework that facilitates an analysis of the content of social media in order to unravel the marketing models employed. Despite common perspectives that celebrate the ease of media production and participation in social networks, a feature that reflects their democratic and open nature, we believe that critical media literacy continues to require the capacity to identify and analyze one of its less readily apparent dimensions: its commercial orientation. We propose an open framework, adapted to each teaching and learning context involving social media and social networks, focusing on four main dimensions: a formal analysis of the social network structure and its privacy policy; an evaluation of the main models of audience segmentation used by each network; a critical review of specific media content; and an analysis of strategies used to promote personalization and audience immersion in the new marketing models. In short, we believe that a critical media literacy for social media and social networks requires more than an instrumental view of functionalities and affordances, but should involve the development of more complex analyses of the commercial implications of social media and the management of user generated data.

1 Introduction

At present, the social media landscape has morphed into a primary communication medium, enabling the easy exchange of information between citizens.

Within the social media ecology, there are multiple formats that enable the exchange of information between users, such as: blogs, marcadores, video platforms, etc. but without a doubt, the settings that have had the most profound impact on the broadest possible demographic are so-called social networking sites. Some authors celebrate the emancipatory and democratic potential of social media (Gil de Zúñiga, Jung, & Valenzuela, 2012; Tang & Lee, 2013), but these discourses often fall short when they neglect to address the corporate control of social media as well as the marketing and market analysis embedded directly in these same mediums. This tendency towards an overly optimistic line of argument supports what Barbrook and Cameron (2013) call "Californian ideology," which is characterized by an unprecedented faith in the emancipatory potential of Web 2.0 technologies, a perspective that has been widely embraced by diverse social actors including politicians, academics, and other opinion leaders. Advocates of this position argue that new communications technologies facilitate a kind of libertarian politics, in which social media provides a democratic space in which we are afforded the opportunity for free expression. Of course, this unbridled enthusiasm is tempered by a growing awareness of "echo chambers" and an increasingly balkanized "public," especially in the light of scandalous revelations of the use of presumably private data by Facebook and Cambridge Analytica to influence elections and other matters of public interest.

The emergence of Web 2.0 has prompted expectations of social transformation which has led to technological developments seeking to facilitate interaction between users. The development of Social Network Sites (SNS), ... has had a major impact on Internet users' daily reality. Boyd and Ellison (2007) have defined these sites as spaces that allow users to create both public and semi-public profiles, to create lists which include the profiles of other users, and to visualize links made by users within the system.

The Internet has become a vast and complex marketplace where products are advertised and sold and where every act of potential and actual consumption is carefully observed, recorded, and transformed into micro and macro data. In effect, we are witnessing the changing of the guard, as 20th century advertising in TV, radio, and newspapers is quickly being replaced by online advertising. In fact, online marketing is, at present, essential to both social networks as well as other Web 2.0 tools, given that it has become one of the main sources of income for the corporations that own these media and whose main selling point is the offer of their services to users "free of charge" (Villena & Molina, 2011).

New internet marketing strategies are increasingly difficult to detect given that companies use forms of participatory communication in which it is

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Abstract

Climate change is a global pressing challenge that requires social action in which young people are called upon to make a difference. However, surveys show that knowledge of the issue is still limited and that a strong commitment to adopting measures for mitigating and adapting to climate change is still lacking. While scientific literacy is important for many reasons, it is too simplistic to think that educational approaches with emphasis on reasoning skills are sufficient to bring about a change. The existence of climate change skepticism and denial forces us to consider a more effective strategy for educators that should also embrace digital media literacy to inspire independent thinking and critical analysis with the goal of participating in meaningful ways to a society with a changing climate. Filling this consideration that young people are constantly exposed to digital games. There is an urgent need to explore this type of media. The proposed chapter aims to present an overview of currently available climate change games based on literature review and web search. A second objective is to discuss a project intervention in class using a climate and energy-related game with Spanish and American students: the impact on students and the experience by teachers. Finally, we provide in this chapter a framework with validated criteria by a panel of experts to critically analyze climate change games.

Introduction

Humanity is in a decisive moment for its continuity as a species on this planet. Eleven years after government on Earth met in Kyoto to try to stop the process of destruction (1997), greenhouse gases continue to be a threat for human beings and the planet. A group of ecological scientists continues to fight against the uncontrollable emission of these gases in the atmosphere, provoking climate change. Their mission is to avoid the impact of these emissions on the health of the planet and therefore