

THE CHANGE IN MEDIA LANDSCAPE

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In the span of forty years, there has been a change in media landscape from traditional to new, influenced and transformed by technology. Previously, a column in a newspaper has expanded the public's knowledge about current events; today's equivalent, a blog page on social media, is extremely accessible; therefore, media has changed our communication by shortening our attention spans and becoming over-saturated and uncurated. An example of this is the Facebook page "Design Insider". I will be discussing five influences that compare old and new media. By using the theories of gatekeeping, collective intelligence, participatory culture, and stages of communication, I can explore and explain the effect that the change has on an audience.

First, one influence is the ability to cover different topic categories due to the space allowance of the two examples, an internet blog and newspaper. Design Insider was meant as a subsidiary page of the Insider news company to feature videos on the inner workings of how products were made. Instead, the categories that I tracked over a period of one week included but was not limited to the following list: technology, product, news, pop-culture, entertainment, history, facts, food, reviews, activities, photography, environment, celebrity gossip, travel, architecture, beauty, medicine, invention, fashion, business, creative, activism, finance, and art. This demonstrates the concept of collective intelligence that "refers to this ability of virtual communities to leverage the combined expertise of their members. What we cannot know or do on our own, we may now be able to do collectively" (Jenkins, 2006, 28).

In traditional media, it would be one person working as a columnist in a newspaper team. They could not combine and write about different topics based on the information that they knew and gathered. The topics covered are decided by the editor and the writer of the column and are much more limited by what is socially acceptable to what a newspaper should cover, "a tightly edited selection of the day's news" (Bruns, 2011, 118). This is known as gatekeeping — the

judgment was made because the stories “were most important for audiences to learn about” (118). Over time, the workplace has become about working collaboratively “to exploit the full resources of a knowledge community rather than put all of their trust in one (...) individual” (Jenkins, 2006, 42). This is an effective tool to reach an audience, especially as the world becomes more globalized.

The more frequent communication influences the audience and has shorted our attention span to be very limited. While technology has allowed a team to have login credentials and each post on the page wherever they may be at different times, it has come to the point where the posting is excessive. On the page’s busiest day there was one post every twelve minutes, not just on design but a hodgepodge of posts from each subsidiary page. In his chapter about ‘The Anatomy of a Knowledge Community’, Jenkins introduces a theory that “communities must closely scrutinize any information that is going to become part of their shared knowledge, since misinformation can lead to more and more misconceptions as any new insight is read against what the group believes to be core knowledge” (28). I believe this to apply to the information acquisition stage of communication, where it is important to have a filter on the knowledge — similar to gatekeeping.

Keeping up with the digital times, the ‘Insider Design’ page has a team that works behind the scenes to post more frequently, keeping their audience engaged. There were two categories of posts, from the page itself and repost from other subpages of the company. Each day I tracked the numbers they varied, spanning from a total of seven on Thursday to 120 posts on Saturday. Technology allows more storage on the internet and, therefore, communication. When I had scrolled through 120 posts that Friday, I tended to become frustrated with the fact that it was not keeping to the theme of the page. I originally followed that page specifically for my interest in

design. If the audience wanted to learn about all their subtopics, wouldn't they follow each page and their feed would become mixed with posts from each? Not only the Facebook page but, almost everything nowadays has become visual. There is a vast amount that is published on the internet, and this page itself. Therefore, the writers of 'Insider Design' must keep in mind that "the median average time spent reading an article is 37 seconds" (Boxer, 2016). This limited attention span has influenced reading length. The blog posts use as few words in their descriptions as possible.

The gatekeepers of the page manipulate what is communicated to their audience in comparison to what happens in a column. A news column has only a limited amount of content space available and the words must be pared down to fit. Our shortened attention spans have changed the communication between a news publisher and their audience because they can no longer write lengthy opinion-based pieces as a newspaper column would or their audience would stop paying attention. A newspaper column is a subsection of a newspaper published either daily, semi-weekly, or weekly depending on the type. "The transition [from old to new media] has been further sped up by the widespread availability of near-real-time social media platforms which accelerate the news cycle even beyond the already significant pressures of 24-hour news channels" (Bruns, 2011, 118). The print readership numbers continue to fall since the digital version was released and apps update with each article and breaking news report. When an audience has access to twenty-four-hour news on cable, it caters to the appetite the audience has for information. Newspapers still have a readership for print, and hasn't ceased to exist, but rather compete with its digital equivalent for an audience.

Fourth, a social media page also has a vast amount of reach in comparison to a printed column, not including its digital counterpart. The page 'Design Insider' is a sub-page of the

media news company Insider that has multiple pages in various industry categories. This page, specifically, has a massive audience of 9, 372, 052 followers with an assumed interest in different topics. In a newspaper column, the decisions on the content to include “were especially critical, in fact, at a time when the total number of news publications in a given regional or national media sphere (...) [were] also strictly limited: when only a handful of newspapers or broadcast news bulletins serviced the interested audience” (119). In this stage of communication, the distribution process has been influenced heavily by technology. Previously, the audience for a newspaper would be much more limited to your region unless it was a national publication. Even so, national publications still only have the readership they do now due to being easily accessible. More and more consumers of news, especially the age of millennials and younger, listen to podcasts on the go, watch short video clips, or receive updates on their phone. Insider is an internet-only publication and therefore has an advantage over traditional publications that made the switch from print to digital.

Lastly, our communication has been influenced by technology in the way that consumers of a digital platform have more interaction between its readers, writers, and among the audience. This is what is known as participatory culture. Traditionally, the news is “almost entirely closed to direct audience participation and contribution, and journalists and editors maintain total control” (119). Their engagement was based on a reader writing a ‘letter to the editor’ and very few if not one would be able to be published at once. This type of media significantly differs from today’s equivalent.

The Insider company publishes short articles, videos, and occasional quizzes, each length being one to three minutes long to read, watch, or participate in. Furthermore, in the field of social media, the quantitative measures that show how successful a page is consists of the

number of views and likes as well as comments where people can write or tag friends in.

However, there is a duality to this change. We can have an open dialogue as a community about issues, but it can also become undisciplined and malicious at times. As a country with freedom of speech, there is no one to point out what facts are wrong and what comments should be taken down if they are offensive.

The increasing change from old media to new media allows everything and anything in content to be published. While there are upsides to technology, we must acknowledge the effect it has on communication. It can have a backfiring effect, where it becomes overwhelming to have too much information. Erikson, in his chapter on 'Information Overload', addresses social media as "the worldwide web of communication rather than mere information; of sharing, chatting and commenting, the democratizing web where everybody gets to have their say, but (...) where the surplus of information makes it difficult to weave a coherent narrative about life, the universe, and everything" (Erikson, 2016, 120). We can see how this applies to 'Design Insider' becoming uncurated as opposed to its original intention in comparison to the curated nature of a newspaper column. There is no connection between the posts, but rather a stream of information for an audience that chose to follow a specific page.

The implications of the newspaper column to social media blog page rest on the theories of collective intelligence and participatory culture. The transition, based on the advancement in technology, has influenced the way that an audience communicates. We no longer rely on a few powerful people making decisions on content but contribute information on topics of our expertise. For an audience to be constantly engaged, media is forced to publish more frequently to maintain its following. We can examine the quantitative aspects such as the 'like' or emoji

feature, comments, and tags. The accessibility of information has increased exponentially, but naturally, over-saturation starts to ensue.

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