

The Making of Postmodern Myths or ‘News from the Media Box of Pandora’

Studies in the Self-Representation of Users of *Twitter*, *Facebook*, and *Youtube* as an Example of the Presentation of a Social Illusion and Ironic Spectacle through the Exchange of Public and Private Spheres in the Mass Media Culture of the 21st Century

-Abstract-

This article aims to describe recent developments of socialization in mass media in social networks and their effect on the conception of privacy and public presentation. Social networks like *Twitter*, *Facebook*, and *Youtube* are virtual surrounding areas where we can study the effects of mass media as tool of socialization. While public forums tend to be related to specific subjects and their users are actively using a pseudonym, the self-presentation of the participating network entities is a main feature of this kind of socialization. 'Privacy made public' could be used as the keywords for this phenomenon of presentation. This study presents also a model of the theoretical structures explaining the operating mechanism of the two tendencies of privacy and publicity in social networks describing their features. Concluding from the tendency to present public information and persons that function in public positions as private persons in an agenda, it is argued that most often private information is used as a political and public relations tool related to the person, but not to the function of the person. On the contrary, a private person intends to become a 'person with an identity' using social networks. This finding justifies considering the influence of the internet as a tool of socialization with an ironical illusion of the virtual space not important for the function of the persons and their socialization in the 'real world'.

1. Introduction:

The Spectacle in the Box of Pandora or ‘The Myth of the Vision of Entertainment’

We will discuss in this part the history of the spectacle, while in the following parts we selected examples that illustrate that the spectacle on the internet is a performance that is actually just on the internet as contents available. The implementation of the masses, in the case of the internet social networks the sharers of the information, is a general feature of spectacles. Bombastic appearances of the spectacle itself that let the single person shrink to a small element both in terms of the participation in the presentation of the spectacle and as a viewer of the spectacle we find both in networks of internet socialization and in spectacles like the opening parades of the Olympic Games. Let us now go back to the roots of the spectacle as a social phenomenon. Latin *spicio* has the meanings ‘to look’, ‘to look at’, and in post-classical Latin ‘to behold’. The term *spectaculum* derived from the verb *specto* and comprised the basic meanings show, sight, and spectacle. In particular settings, it means a spectacle in the theatre, circus, a public sight or show, a stage play, or spectacle. Transferred, it is the place whence plays are witnessed, the seats of the spectators, seats, places in the theatre, the amphitheatre. It also is used for a wonder or miracle; so *spectacula septem* are the Seven Wonders of the World mentioned by Vitruvius (2.8.11). The term *spectacle* refers to an event that is memorable and presented to an audience. The term derived from the verb *spectare* for ‘to view’ and ‘to watch’. According to *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, a spectacle is something exhibited to view as unusual, notable, or entertaining; especially or something (as natural markings on an animal) suggesting a pair of glasses. Kellner stated in *Media Culture and the Triumph of the Spectacle* that “industries have multiplied media spectacles in novel spaces and sites, and spectacle itself is becoming one of the organizing principles of the economy, polity, society, and everyday life. An Internet-based economy has been developing hi-tech spectacle as a means of promotion, reproduction, and the circulation and selling of commodities, using multi-media and increasingly sophisticated technology to dazzle consumers. Media culture proliferates ever more technologically sophisticated spectacles to seize audiences and augment their power and profit.” (Kellner). The bread and circus-spectacle type is used for the entertainment of the masses in order to escape from social problems for the masses. It refers to low cultural show events operating in an environment for the masses. The U.S.-American Wrestling shows are spectacles in the 21st century. In modern mass media communication entertainment matching popular taste in TV programs or block buster movies designed for the taste of the masses is serving the purpose to entertain the people and keep them comfortable in their function

as consumers. The opera as the 17th century *Gesamtkunstwerk* was a spectacle that supported the emperor's esteem. Today companies support events such as musical spectacles financially or as a partner using it to promote their brands or in order to promote public relations aims. In 1967 in *The Society of the Spectacle* (chapter 1 *The Culmination of Separation*) Guy Debord wrote: "In societies dominated by modern conditions of production, life is presented as an immense accumulation of spectacles. Everything that was directly lived has receded into a representation." In *The Society of the Spectacle* (chapter 1) Debord mentioned regarding the function of images and the fragmentation of the view towards reality: "The images detached from every aspect of life merge into a common stream in which the unity of that life can no longer be recovered. Fragmented views of reality regroup themselves into a new unity as a separate pseudo-world that can only be looked at. The specialization of images of the world evolves into a world of autonomized images where even the deceivers are deceived. The spectacle is a concrete inversion of life, an autonomous movement of the nonliving." Debord mentioned here that the unification of the spectacle is actually an "official language of universal separation": "The spectacle presents itself simultaneously as society itself, as a part of society, and as a means of unification. As a part of society, it is the focal point of all vision and all consciousness. But due to the very fact that this sector is separate, it is in reality the domain of delusion and false consciousness: the unification it achieves is nothing but an official language of universal separation." Debord wrote about the root of the spectacle: "The root of the spectacle is that oldest of all social specializations, the specialization of power. The spectacle plays the specialized role of speaking in the name of all the other activities. It is hierarchical society's ambassador to itself, delivering its official messages at a court where no one else is allowed to speak. The most modern aspect of the spectacle is thus also the most archaic." (Debord). For Debord the spectacle is a replacement of a free society. The spectacle is the official organ of speaking of the power. We will now examine how in the internet this '*spectacle presents itself simultaneously as society itself*' starting from the semiotic roots of the ground of the digitalized information to the reception of the internet by its interpretants, the users. The curiosity to see the things that are inside a box is with all its negative side effects first described by humankind in the Greek myth. In the Greek myth the Pandora is the goddess who spreads evil. Hesiod wrote on the creation of Pandora:

So said the father of men and gods, and laughed aloud. And he bade famous Hephaestus make haste and mix earth with water and to put in it the voice and strength of human kind, and fashion a sweet, lovely maiden-shape, like to the immortal goddesses in face; and Athena to teach her needlework and the weaving of the varied web; and golden Aphrodite to shed grace upon her head and cruel longing and cares that weary the limbs. And he charged Hermes the guide, the Slayer of Argus, to put in her a shameless mind and a deceitful nature. So he ordered. And they obeyed the lord Zeus the son of Cronos. Forthwith the famous Lame God moulded clay in the likeness of a modest maid, as the son of Cronos purposed. And the goddess brighteyed Athena girded and clothed her, and the divine Graces and queenly Persuasion put necklaces of gold upon her, and the rich-haired Hours crowned her head with spring flowers. And Pallas Athena bedecked her form with all manner of finery. Also the Guide, the Slayer of Argus, contrived within her lies and crafty words and a deceitful nature at the will of loud thundering Zeus, and the Herald of the gods put speech in her. And he called this woman Pandora, because all they who dwelt on Olympus gave each a gift, a plague to men who eat bread.

(Hesiod)

Many interpretations of the myth consider Pandora the evil female man has to accept. So according to Martin, "in the legend, Zeus, the king of the gods, created Pandora as a punishment for men when Prometheus, a divine being hostile to Zeus, stole fire from Zeus to give it to Prometheus's human friends, who had hitherto lacked that technology. Pandora subsequently loosed "evils and diseases" into the previously trouble-free world of men by removing the lid from the jar or box the gods had filled for her. Hesiod then refers to Pandora's descendants, the female sex, as a "beautiful evil" for men ever after, comparing them to drones who live off the toil of other bees while devising mischief at home. But, he goes on to say, any man who refuses to marry to escape the "troublesome deeds of women" will come to "destructive old age" without any children to care for him. After his death, moreover, his relatives will divide his property among themselves. A man must marry, in other words, so that he can sire children to serve as his support system in his waning years and to preserve his holdings after his death by inheriting them. Women, according to Greek mythology, were for men a necessary evil, but the reality of women's lives in the city-state incorporated social and religious roles

of enormous importance.” (Martin). Besides this interpretation, we will here interpret the box of Pandora as an allegory of the internet. The all-giving woman, the allegory Pandora, represents the internet and its variety of things it gives to the users. The negative side effects of the internet, metaphorically speaking the diseases Pandora brings to the humans, are only recognizable from a distant angle: The internet is a mirror for the isolation of the single human, the curiosity of Pandora to open the box we can compare to the curious user of the internet gathering the news, private or public, from the webpage and displaying own information on the internet up to a degree the own personal identity is placed and presented on the medium or the person creates an avatar that represents the person on the internet. The user of the internet can have both the position of Pandora opening the chest of evil for humans with hope remaining imprisoned in the box or as the receiver of the evil. The negative association of the box of Pandora with the internet we present here must be differentiated with a look at the positive effects of the medium.

2. Research Positions on Media and Media Types and Online Socialization

The boundaries between private entertainment and publishing are now as low as never before in the history of mankind: a user of *Twitter* with fifty “followers” can maintain a kind of dialogue. One whose tweet is read by 2000 can not maintain a dialogue. The borderline where private communication ends and public begins can no longer be unambiguously defined in times of real-time Web and this article will discuss this using exemplary cases. Mc Combs’s and Shaw’s article *The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media* published in 1972 is among the most quoted papers in the fields of social sciences interested in mass media. This agenda setting function meanwhile extended to the areas of publishing in mass media removing borders of privacy and public appearance of public figures. Examples are the photographs of politicians presenting them on holiday, just to mention the photographs of the presidents of France, Sarkozy, and Russia, Putin, in 2008/2009 as online news, as well as the twitter presentation of U.S. president Obama. Here the agenda setting function of the media is an ironified inversion of the average life mediated as mass media entertainment. Research of mass media is done from different perspectives. Bignell wrote: “However, many of the current studies which take their lead from these theorists have labeled particular media texts or practices as postmodern without being able to integrate a wide-ranging critique of contemporary media culture with a critique of theories of the postmodern.” (Bignell 2000: 1).

What are mass media? Mass media is “the means of communication that reach large numbers of people, such as television, newspapers, and radio.” (*Collins Essential English Dictionary*). Mass media are “those means of communication that reach and influence large numbers of people, esp. newspapers, popular magazines, radio, and television.” (*Webster’s New World College Dictionary*). Akin presents the following definition of mass media: “‘Mass media’ is a deceptively simple term encompassing a countless array of institutions and individuals who differ in purpose, scope, method, and cultural context. Mass media include all forms of information communicated to large groups of people, from a handmade sign to an international news network. There is no standard for how large the audience needs to be before communication becomes ‘mass’ communication. There are also no constraints on the type of information being presented. A car advertisement and a U.N. resolution are both examples of mass media. Because “media” is such a broad term, it will be helpful in this discussion to focus on a limited definition. In general usage, the term has been taken to refer to only “the group of corporate entities, publishers, journalists, and others who constitute the communications industry and profession.” This definition includes both the entertainment and news industries.” Akin also wrote about the importance of mass media: “Mass communicated media saturate the industrialized world. The television in the living room, the newspaper on the doorstep, the radio in the car, the computer at work, and the fliers in the mailbox are just a few of the media channels daily delivering advertisements, news, opinion, music, and other forms of mass communication. Because the media are so prevalent in industrialized countries, they have a powerful impact on how those populations view the world. Nearly all of the news in the United States comes from a major network or newspaper. It is only the most local and personal events that are experienced first-hand. Events in the larger community, the state, the country, and the rest of the world are experienced through the eyes of a journalist. Not only do the media report the news, they create the news by deciding what to report.” (Akin). Ess and Sudweeks mentioned that “while the mass media distribute identical information set to different people, providing widespread common experiences and homogenizing opinions, the computer media opens a public space in which different people and groups express their idiosyncratic points of view. So, mass media constitutes a homogenized audience while the Internet gives rise to a multitude of different partial publics.” (Ess and Sudweeks 2001: 78).

3. An Example Case for Private Online Networks: Barack Obama on *Twitter*, *Facebook*, and *Youtube*

What are the characteristics of social online networks? Boyd and Ellison defined social network sites as follows: "We define social network sites as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site." (Boyd; Ellison). Wildbite's *Social Networks Research Report* contains short descriptions of the features of major online social networks. (Wildbite). The effects of the mass media for political leadership were discussed by Goldstein and Findley, Balkin, and Morris. Goldstein and Findley wrote: „Exposure to mass media is significantly greater among opinion leaders than among nonleaders-and mass media directly influence opinion leaders. It is important to note that opinion leaders are far more effective in securing opinion changes among followers than are the mass media.” (Goldstein and Findley 1996: 57). Balkin wrote on the advantages of mass media for a democracy: “Without mass media, openness and accountability are impossible in contemporary democracies. Nevertheless, mass media can hinder political transparency as well as help it. Politicians and political operatives can simulate the political virtues of transparency through rhetorical and media manipulation. Television tends to convert coverage of law and politics into forms of entertainment for mass consumption, and television serves as fertile ground for a self-proliferating culture of scandal. Given the limited time available for broadcast and the limited attention of audiences, stories about political strategy, political infighting, political scandal and the private lives of politicians tend to crowd out less entertaining stories about substantive policy questions.” (Balkin). Morris referred to Habermas and his concept of social spheres stating: “Furthermore, when systems spheres experience blockages or crises in their coordinating functions, which may be due to internal limits or contradictions or external, environmental factors, then recourse for addressing or solving such crises may be made to the powerful resources of coordination located in the lifeworld”. (Morris 2001: 73).

With the examples of the online social networks *Twitter*, *Facebook*, and *Youtube* we will demonstrate that the contemporary use of such networks has a structure of primary texts and secondary texts. The effect of the use of such networks as professional tools for media entertainment and media presence of decision makers aims to provide the illusion of closeness between the presented persons and the recipients. The structure of the social networks both the prominent users and other users use is the same: A primary text of medium of one participating entity is presented aiming to have a maximum of followers. The 'One to Many' communicative situation has a higher potential to be reached the more prominent the person is. So within the number of countless participating entities, the most prominent will attract other participant entities. This effect is for example strategically used by leaders and artists for political and PR presentations. So politicians can present themselves to the mass of the visitors of social services giving the audience the impression of socializing with them. Modern leadership uses the effect of imitating an average 9 to 5 job of politicians showing them also while on holiday or in private situations. The positive aspects of medial presence of politics like in the case of Obama Balkin considers as contribution to transparency. Balkin wrote on transparency of politics: “Today political transparency is virtually impossible without some form of mass media coverage. However, mass media can frustrate the values of political transparency even while appearing to serve those values. When politicians and political operatives attempt to simulate transparency and appropriate the rhetoric of openness and accountability, the mass media does not always counteract the simulation. Indeed, it may actually tend to proliferate it.” (Balkin). On the contrary, Miller wrote for the *Dictionary of American History* that the internet is subject to “corporate dominion”: “The term “mass media” refers to various audiovisual culture industries that send content from a particular source to a wide audience—for example, recorded music and television. The twentieth century in the United States was characterized by the transformation of artisanal, local hobbies and small businesses into highly centralized, rationalized industries working like production lines, and the entertainment and informational media were no different.” (Miller). We use now three examples for the presentation of political contents in a social network that is used for private persons.

Barack Obama and Comments on *Youtube*

The inaugural address of Barack Obama president of the United States was broadcasted on *Youtube* and attached by a file of comments:

President Barack Obama's Inaugural Address. Youtube. June 23, 2009.

<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3PuHGKnboNY&feature=PlayList&p=426831BC08A165DC&index=0>>.

Reply

I will vote for the first time, for Obama in 2012 :)

shark111 (5 hours ago) Show Hide

0

Reply

i dreamt obama and his wife was going through a divorce...trippy.

bigbootymimiful (11 hours ago) Show Hide

0

Reply

Omg mofos are still leaving childish comments on this video....l...

CharlieDanielsFan55 (12 hours ago) Show Hide

Reply

4 years of Obama is going to be the worst 4 years this country has experienced in awhile... Let's face it, this guy got elected because he promised "handouts" to folks in poverty.. The ones that don't get off their ass and work for a living like other Americans do to help pay for these "handouts"... Democracy is dead during Obama's term, mostly because everything he wants will get passed by the liberal senate.. Do I smell dictatorship?

heelflip964 (12 hours ago) Show Hide

Barack Obama on Twitter

BarackObama. Twitter.com. 29th of June 2009.

<<https://twitter.com/BarackObama>>.

Home Profile Find People Settings Help Sign out BarackObama

Following

You follow BarackObama

BarackObama's updates appear in your timeline.

1 in 5 Americans with HIV doesn't know it. Please share this National HIV Testing Day video:

<[#NHTD09](http://bit.ly/8h7p1)

about 19 hours ago from web

House passes historic clean energy and climate bill today, thanks to your grassroots support.

5:43 PM Jun 26th from TwitterBerry

The House is voting on a historic clean energy bill today. Have you called your representative about it?

<<http://bit.ly/aWcDK>

9:06 AM Jun 26th from web

These stories show why affordable health care for every American can't wait: <<http://bit.ly/13Bm5M>

#healthcare09 PLS RT

Barack Obama in the Network Facebook

Barack Obama. Facebook. 29th of June 2009.

<<http://www.facebook.com/s.php?q=Obama&init=q&sid=790c1ae3d7b2e2146edbdabd22b45fa1#/barackobama?ref=s>>.

Barack Obama on Facebook.

Barack Obama 1 in 5 Americans currently living with HIV doesn't know it. Do you know your HIV status?

National HIV Testing Day

Please get tested and share this National HIV Testing Day video with your friends.

3.058 Barack Obama One of the most significant pieces of energy legislation in history is up for an extremely close vote in the House today. Have you called your representative to ask them to support it yet?A chance to create a clean energy economy

Barack Obama One of the most significant pieces of energy legislation in history is up for an extremely close vote in the House today. Have you called your representative to ask them to support it yet? A chance to create a clean energy economy

The American Clean Energy and Security Act would create a framework of clean energy incentives that will spur the development of new clean energy technologies – innovations that have the potential to create millions of new jobs that can't be shipped overseas. A chance to create a clean energy economy

Please call your representative today and help make sure the American Clean Energy and Security Act—crucial to creating millions of new, good green jobs—passes out of the House.

On *Twitter* the information is presented as initial information, which is followed by other participants. In the case of the *Twitter* presentation of the president the daily schedule is simply edited and presented in a short version. *Twitter* has the function to display any message to the worldwide audience immediately available. *Twitter* is actually for non-professional participating persons, but also professional mass media institutions may directly or indirectly participate in it. The social network distinguishes between 'topics' and 'persons' as criteria of the information available. In *Facebook* the information presented is actually the information of a single person on a "page" of this "facebook". Other persons can access the website and they can be connected with displayed pictures as friends. *Youtube* is actually a multimedia social network. Videos are the main tool of presentation. Here the primary information is presented in this specific medium. The secondary information consists of commentaries attached and in written form. The ironical illusion of the spectacular appearance of the public as the private is on the one hand the tendency, which the professional users of media like politicians and artists use to employ. On the other hand we have the masses of anonymous participating users in social networks that either present something, for example a music video of a famous musician or their own music, to the public. So the private person presents itself in a framework of a potential universal audience. The spectacular appearance is here an ironical inversion of classical spectacles. While spectacles used to be representations of the power of an institution, the spectacles of the mass media cultures are actually not existing except as virtual performance or serve as copies of a spectacle or an event that is used as a spectacle. The opposition of the events of the real world and the presentation of events on the internet is here evident.

We will here present the privacy notices of the social online networks *Twitter*, *Facebook*, and *YouTube* in order to discuss and compare their features in the context of the discussion of mass media ethics. The protection of privacy and the personal sphere of users of online services who are not using the network for professional purposes like in the case above is discussed and subject to rules and regulations of the internet providers and legal systems. So Sanchez Abril wrote regarding online social networks: "However, the hallmarks of digital information and the ease of informational exchange facilitated by this medium lead to more noxious privacy and personality harms than ever before. Privacy law has traditionally been criticized for not having "enough dead bodies." (Sanchez Abril 2007: 543). While this corporeal metaphor no longer applies, privacy harms are no longer short-lived and innocuous. The information's digital permanence, searchability, replicability, transformability, and multitude of often unintended audiences make its effects more damaging than ever." So far, besides the humanities and mass media communication studies, the network *Social Networking Watch* has itself established for critical timely reports about social networks in mass media. The website presents the latest statistical data regarding social networks worldwide from different institutions and mass media outlets. Surendra and Peace recently analyzed the privacy on the internet (Sanchez Abril 2007: 543). Habermas wrote in *Communicative Ethics* about an egalitarian communication: "To be sure, structural features of communicative forms of life alone are not sufficient to justify the claim that members of a particular historical community ought to transcend their particularistic value-orientations and make the transition to the fully symmetrical and inclusive relations of an egalitarian universalism. On the other hand, a universalistic conception that wants to avoid false abstractions must draw on insights from the theory of communication. From the fact that persons can only be individuated through socialization it follows that moral concern is owed equally to persons both as irreplaceable individuals and as members of the community, and hence it connects justice with solidarity. Equal treatment means equal treatment of unequals who are nonetheless aware of their interdependence." (Habermas). The framework of privacy the online services are working under is the legal system of the state the websites are published in. In the *Statement of Rights and Responsibilities of Facebook* (Date of Last Revision: August 28, 2009) was written on privacy:

"This Statement of Rights and Responsibilities ("Statement") derives from the Facebook Principles, and

governs our relationship with users and others who interact with Facebook. By using or accessing Facebook, you agree to this Statement.

Privacy

Your privacy is very important to us. We designed our Privacy Policy to make important disclosures about how you can use Facebook to share with others and how we collect and can use your content and information. We encourage you to read the Privacy Policy, and to use it to help make informed decisions."

In the *YouTube Privacy Notice* was written:

"YouTube Privacy Notice

Updated as of March 11, 2009 (View archived version)

Personal Information

Browsing YouTube You can watch videos on YouTube without having a YouTube Account or a Google Account. You also can contact us through the YouTube Help Center or by emailing us directly without having to register for an account.

Your YouTube Account. For some activities on YouTube, like uploading videos, posting comments, flagging videos, or watching restricted videos, you need a YouTube or Google Account. We ask for some personal information when you create an account, including your email address and a password, which is used to protect your account from unauthorized access. A Google Account, additionally, allows you to access other Google services that require registration.

Usage Information. When you use YouTube, we may record information about your usage of the site, such as the channels, groups and favorites you subscribe to, which other users you communicate with, the videos you watch, the frequency and size of data transfers, and information you display about yourself as well as information you click on in YouTube (including UI elements, settings)."

The *Twitter Privacy Notice* states about privacy, when using this service:

"Twitter Privacy Policy

This Privacy Policy is effective as of May 14, 2007.

"Our primary goals in collecting personally identifiable information are to provide you with the product and services made available through the Site, including, but not limited, to the Service, to communicate with you, and to manage your registered user account, if you have one.

Information Collected Upon Registration. If you desire to have access to certain restricted sections of the Site, you will be required to become a registered user, and to submit certain personally identifiable information to Twitter. This happens in a number of instances, such as when you sign up for the Service, or if you desire to receive marketing materials and information. Personally identifiable information that we may collect in such instances may include your IP address, full user name, password, email address, city, time zone, telephone number, and other information that you decide to provide us with, or that you decide to include in your public profile."

Lee and Fung wrote in *Online Social Networks and E-Commerce. Their Threats to Privacy and a Proposal for a New Blanket Privacy Policy and Standard for Privacy Notices*: "A vast variety of data is collected about the user, and the current legal system has different legal standards for different kinds of data. This is problematic because the privacy policies against government and third-party intrusions are complex and confusing to the end user. To better protect consumers' privacy, all aggregated user data and online activities should be subjected to the same level of protection under a blanket privacy policy." (Lee; Fung). Lee and Fung also mentioned: "All these different services have a common theme—the social networks combine people from all around the world who share similar interests and friends. These social networking Web sites provide ways for members to communicate with each other, and give Web space for users to post information about themselves. These Web sites provide a low cost and convenient way for consumers to stay connected with the members of the Web site. These online social networking platforms also allow user to publish and control content about them easily. The databank of digital information has also helped users better and more quickly find information about others around the world." On the contrary, Ess and Sudweeks wrote from a more critical standpoint that "mass communication has to remain impersonal; its themes have to address an anonymous mass public. From this perspective, strategies which try to involve the receivers as communicators in mass media events make little sense. They may open up the possibility of a personal arrangement of media products but then this is inevitably cancelled out at a later stage by the distribution methods of the mass media, which are based on anonymous communicator mechanisms."

(Ess; Sudweeks 2001: 73). The profiles of the users of the social online networks serve for the information of the other participating persons. But as declared by *Twitter*, the profiles serve for the commercial marketing of products and services of the social network. The management of friends as social groups with similar profiles allows the marketing to find suitable customers.

4. A Model of Social Networks in Mass Media

The concept of channel of communication is well established and we will follow this concept with a specialization for mass media channels. Shin stated that “innovations must be communicated through certain channels, over time. The innovation will actually pass through five stages that include: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation. Banks should use mass media and creative marketing at the knowledge stage to promote, attract, and tempt users to try e-banking/e-lending. However, in order to actually sell the product and gain consumer acceptance, banks will need to persuade the customer through interpersonal channels of communication versus mass media.” (Shin 2004: 277). Communication happens within channels. A channel serves as the tool that conveys the communication and allows the process to perform. Channels process the information, for example a medium serves as a channel or language serves as a channel in direct interpersonal communication/conversation. Channels connect clusters and channels are connected using a specific medium. For example literacy is bound to visual characters. Mass media communication relies on the mass media as channels. When information is transferred from one medium to the other, a loss of information may appear. But also the production of meanings is possible. Baker wrote: “Most people are aware of the increasing fragmentation of media channels. However, perhaps more importantly, there is a wide variety of new channels of communication which can be used by brand owners to communicate with potential consumers and others – postcards, mobile Internet, till receipts, fuel pumps, hoardings around sports grounds and product placement, to name but a few.” (Baker 2003: 402).

Like in any other communication process, in social online networks we can describe as clusters or nodes the different formations of participating entities within a communication process. Clustering of the nodes is the process of the formation of the participating entities. The concrete form of the clusters depends on the form of the participating entities and can be described in an abstract model. Different clustered participating entities can have the same formation in an abstract model. Clusters are connected by channels. The clusters of a network enable the communication process (cluster network). Depending on the formation of the clusters the communication process is centralized or decentralized with a hierarchy or low hierarchy. Gossip is an example for oral communication that has low hierarchy. Gossip is also spontaneous. It is a form of oral communication. The clusters of an online social network act similarly. The spectacular appearance of the online presentations of social online internet services is based on the effect that personal and private information are now presented to a potentially worldwide community. The communicated contents are not important for a majority of persons or as news in the traditional sense of mass media journalism. The platform of the hosting servers delivers the software and the facilities that enable private persons to perform as parts of their services. The number of participating persons guarantees the value of the online service as a product and the attractiveness of the website for commercial services, e.g. for advertisements. In the cases of the use of such private websites by public figures the inversion of the spectacular appearance is based upon the appearance of personal figures as private persons. Here the services are used for effects like credibility of a politician or PR for an artist. In terms of journalistic mass media categories, here the 'human interest' stories and PR are the aims of the users. Perse wrote: “Correlation is the editorial and explanation function of mass communication. Information is often complex. Through correlation, mass media clarify and explain the relevance of information.” (Perse 2000: 55). Banner in *Privacy or Publicity - Who Drives the Wheel?* mentioned that “financial markets are to a very large extent influenced by the advent of information. Such disclosures, however, do not only contain information about fundamentals underlying the markets, but they also serve as a focal point for the beliefs of market participants. This dual role of information gains further importance for explaining the development of asset valuations when taking into account that information may be perceived individually (private information), or may be commonly shared by all traders (public information).” Banner distinguished here between private and public information. (Banner).

Information of the Area of Privacy Amateur

vs

Public and Private in the Sphere of Public Media

Interferences between the personal and private area and the area of the public can occur in the social networks of the internet. Both the information of the area of the privacy of an amateur, for example a private website of a user, and public information, for example the presentation of political contents like in the case of the presentation of the agenda of the president of the U.S., can be shared on one platform. Private information can become public, e.g. in the case of the use of a news displayed on *Twitter* used by a professional journalist as information of an eyewitness. De facto the internet online services provide the persons that use the services with a corporate identity. In contrast to the professional corporate identity of organizations this corporate identity of social networks aims to provide personal profiles with a high variety of personal settings. This variety means that the participating persons share private information on the internet. The legal framework of the providers of such internet services covers the general privacy interests and serves as legal framework for the display of information. But the displaying of information of a person on such networks results in a presentation of private information that enters the personal sphere; the protection of such data from interests of a third party is not safe. So commercial interests and marketing interests of a third party can use online information provided by the pool of data of the participating persons of social networks. But also such users that appear as private persons can actually be used as a representative of a third party that has interests other than the share of personal information. It is common usage of the research and practical work in mass media communication to refer to the information displayed as 'contents'. This expression, lacking any linguistic impact, reflects the cognitive associations of the internet as a container with contents to be inserted by the users. This rhetoric of the internet in the social networks continues with the imaginative presentation of a persona with living features displayed of the internet. The expression 'Facebook' presents the illusion of the users to own and write a book, while they are simply entering contents according to the settings of the internet provider. On the level of the classification of the displayed information in internet services we must state that the data made available are highly structured and selected by the technical settings of the service that offers the services. To describe its structure, it is quite helpful to modify the sentence "the medium is the message" to the sentence "the structure of the medium determinates the contents".

As agents of socialization the members of the group are less influential than agents in the real world such as the family. Heinz and Acquisti mentioned regarding social networks: "While social networking sites share the basic purpose of online interaction and communication, specific goals and patterns of usage vary significantly across different services. The most common model is based on the presentation of the participant's profile and the visualization of her network of relations to others - such is the case of Friendster. This model can stretch towards different directions." A model of social networks on the internet is based upon the assumption that a participating entity presents itself to an audience, which has a potentially endless number of persons. The social networks show differences regarding the features of the presentation of that entity. In general, we can say that this is a 'one to many'-communication and the content communicated by an individual is not addressed to a single person. A website presentation of a participating human is e.g. the primary information entity and a commentary attached to this website presentation is the secondary information entity. Information is bound to a person that is presented on a special area owned by the owner.

Human communication between the participating persons of the services is meant to be displayable and serving the internet providers. The services rely here on management concepts like the concept of a community to create the illusion that persons belonging to this internet provider have something 'in common'. The members of such 'communities' with their profiles are subject to the screening process of similar persons. While in traditional linguistic understanding a narrative is a story that is created in a specific format describing fictional or non-fictional events written by one author, in the online services the author in the traditional sense doesn't exist. The writers of such services like *Facebook* present their contents and fill in missing blanks in the settings of the internet system. In contrast to traditional forms of writing, here a quasi-corporate author writes the 'book' and is the legal authority. The data and performances on the internet lack criteria of socialization such as specific moral norms and values, individual social roles, and a specific language. The individuals appear in the internet network only as representatives of a world outside the internet. Within the social network, they are

able to share information that comes from places outside the network. In other words expressed: They communicate information from the area out of the network to the participating entities inside the network. To put it in a simple phrase: The internet produces no information, the information is inserted, to speak with the cognitive metaphoric of the internet, into the internet as contents. Content is a specific formal expression for information displayed on the internet. Contents can have any form and medium, its specific characteristics are that the contents are on the internet as the superstructural framework for the display of the internet available. By communicating the contents of the internet between the members, it provides for the continuity of the network. Social norms use to be described as 'netiquette' regulating the behavior of the users on the internet. As developmental socialization of the social institution 'internet', the users are asked to apply the rules of the institution. The rules are derivatives from the rules of the real world, usually put in an international framework.

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