

Online Education to Unite US Citizens
(Technical Topic)

Accessing, Sharing, and Communicating Information Through Digital Media
(STS Topic)

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On my honor as a University Student, I have neither given nor received
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General Research Problem: Accessing, Sharing, and Communicating Information Through Digital Media

How can digital media shape the way that information is accessed, shared, and communicated?

Unlike any other time in history, at the turn of the 21st century the primary mode of accessing, sharing, and communicating information globally is through digital media (numerical, text, audio, video, etc.). In the past 30 to 40 years alone, creation of the Internet coupled with rapid advancements in technology have resulted in vast amounts of information suddenly becoming readily available to nearly everyone on the planet with the simple push of a button. According to current usage rates, there are over 40,000 searches conducted on Google every second generating billions of results that provide people with access to enormous amounts of information (Marr, 2019, n.p). However, with all of this information available, it is difficult to highlight what constitutes the most important information and then convince people to pay attention to it. In light of this, a major goal for many groups and individuals is to be heard and to convey their ideas with others.

Creation of the Internet made possible the invention of social media platforms, such as Twitter, whereby anyone is able to disseminate their information and opinions out to the world. More importantly, through this app people can also retweet, like, and respond to other's posts, making their information more available for others to see and thus broadening the impact of the information being communicated. Availability and unimpeded accessibility to digital media therefore plays a major role in the informal education of others, and serves as a primary means for ensuring that the masses will discover and learn about the facts and ideas presented by the individual. Websites and web-based modules are but two examples of how information is

commonly made available via digital media on the internet and through which people can discover and learn important and novel information. In today's technological world, digital media now plays a major role in how information is shared, accessed, and communicated, and if used correctly has the potential to rapidly spread new ideas and important information globally to an ever-expanding audience. Determining how best to capitalize on the educational potential of digital media platforms is paramount to effective and impactful dissemination of information.

Digitally Educating Citizens on An Alternate Approach to Wellness

How can a web-based module educate citizens on an alternative wellness score and the importance of the five pillars of the constitution?

The current metric for evaluating how well countries are doing is the GDP (Gross Domestic Product). As an economic wellness metric, the GDP assesses the sum of the market values of all final goods and services produced in a country over a given time period. While the GDP is an accurate and consistent metric, it is not the best indicator of the overall wellness of a country, as wellness is not solely defined by economic success. A potentially better metric for the overall wellness of citizens is the Promise America Wellness Score, or PAWS. The PAWS is a weighted average of five scores, each of which is based off of one of the five pillars of the US Constitution (Justice, Tranquility, Defense, Welfare, and Liberty). This new metric is not only beneficial to the nation by allowing for a better idea of how the country is doing, it also allows people to understand what being well means to them and how to improve their personal wellness.

Although the PAWS provides a more accurate assessment of national wellness, generated in 2017 only a small number of people have heard about or used it.

Our goal is to create a way to educate people about this new metric for wellness and demonstrate the benefits of it over the current metric of GDP, while at the same time attempting to give people the chance to learn about and evaluate their own wellness. This will involve making interactive modules that go through each pillar of the constitution and demonstrate what it means to be well in each one. Specifically, modules will act as a digital medium through which we will spread the important info about the PAWS and its relationship to each pillar of the constitution. Following development of the interactive wellness modules, each will be pilot tested with various potential audiences. Data collected through user evaluations, as well as pre and post tests, will be analyzed to determine the level of engagement and educational outcomes. College students will be the first pilot test users to assess the modules, as they are the most accessible demographic and technologically adept. After analyzing the results and revising the modules we will expand to a larger audience. While the overall goal of these modules is to inform the public on the PAWS and importance of the five pillars of the constitution, this research also forms a basis for future work involving the education of people through digital media in the most effective and efficient way possible. Specifically, the development and assessment of interactive modules to inform provides an initial digital media platform for improving college athletes' presentation and communication skills through Twitter.

Shaping College Athletes' Presentation and Communication Through Twitter

How are college athletes using Twitter to present themselves and interact with fans?

In 2006, a young entrepreneur working for a technology startup company had an idea for a new social media app based around what people were doing at a given time (Carlson, 2011, n.p).

What was originally called Twtr, was a social media platform on which people could post

whatever text they wanted, as long as it was within the character limit. Within the next decade, the name of the app would be formally changed to Twitter and would become the home to over 260 million users worldwide. What began as an app just for people to see what others were doing at that moment, Twitter has become a major hub for sharing and accessing information. There are two major aspects of Twitter that make it unique and important when it comes to the sharing and accessing of information. The first is that anyone, anywhere can tweet what is on their mind. This means that politicians, athletes, and everyday people can share their opinions and information, whether or not it is true or false. This leads into the second important aspect of Twitter, which is how easy it is to share and access any tweet. Retweet and like features allow people to share tweets that they enjoy or think are important, which can then be seen by all of their followers. This in turn leads to others retweeting and liking, creating a spiral effect allowing the possibility for millions of people to receive the information. All of this information floating around, being retweeted and liked allows people to access new ideas and thoughts all from the scrolling of an app. The ease of using Twitter and its ability to reach users worldwide provides a digital medium with significant influential potential of target populations. How one might capitalize on the influential potential of Twitter is the focus of this research proposal. Specifically, the research question that will guide this investigation is to what extent college athletes use Twitter to present themselves and interact with their audience, and how different groups of people influence this use.

Context

Twitter is a prime example of a digital media app that has changed the way people share and access information, and there are many different demographics that utilize the app. A demographic that has seen an increase in Twitter usage since its creation is college athletes.

College athletes use Twitter for a plethora of reasons, including as a social medium, a tool for activism, and a way to communicate with fans and players. Athletes are a unique group of people in the sense that they have many different groups of people looking at them with different interests. Fans want the players to be interactive and contactable, while coaches and universities want the players to perform at a high level while maintaining a positive image while representing the university. The majority of the players' Twitter activity is likely appropriate, however, in some cases players have written and shared inappropriate tweets that create public relations issues for the athletic programs and the university (Sanders & Brown, 2013, 105-107). As a result, athletic programs have begun to create and change policies referring to twitter and social media use among athletes to reduce and prevent negative consequences from arising. These precautions include researching potential players' Twitter activity, creating posting policies, and enforcing punishments for inappropriate behavior. Twitter not only has the potential for negative consequences for players, but it also offers them a platform through which they can express ideas and promote activism. It is in this context that Twitter has the potential to help shape an athlete's presentation and communication skills. For example, college athletes can use tweets to draw attention to whatever cause they are adamant about, increasing access to their ideas and informing their audience about their cause. This activism can take many forms, such as promoting a petition (Hull, 2014, 533-534), or standing up for racial equality (Yan, Pegoraro, & Watanabe, 2018, 24-25). With many different social groups having different interests regarding college athletes, Twitter can be used as a technical medium for athletes to present themselves and communicate with these groups.

Methods/Data Collection

In order to understand the shaping that Twitter has had on college athletes, it will be important to conduct interviews with athletes who use the app to get a firsthand account of how it has impacted them. These interviews will attempt to gain information about when and why the athletes first started using Twitter, what they use it for now, if they use the app to communicate with fans, and if they have had any negative experiences with the app. It will also be important to hold interviews with coaches to understand if they have changed any of their practices regarding college athletes as a result of Twitter. Finally, it will be necessary to find case studies of athletes who have suffered consequences from past inappropriate tweets. From these interviews and case studies, qualitative analysis will be done to look for patterns or similar themes in the results. The results of this analysis will be integral in attempting to answer the question of how college athletes can effectively present themselves to the public and communicate with fans. In addition to these interviews, for any future continuance of research on this topic it will be important to continue researching literature on social media's prevalence among college athletes and how they are using Twitter as a platform for their views and communication.

Digital media platforms, such as Twitter, have seen a tremendous growth in use in recent decades. Twitter allows its users to project their ideas and information to the world, with the capacity to be seen by millions through retweets, likes, and replies. College athletes use Twitter as one of their main platforms of sharing information and communicating, be that socially, as activism, or with their fans. Through this investigation of college students, specifically athletes, I hope to further understand how Twitter can be used to help shape the way they positively communicate their ideas when interacting with fans and others. Research results will be useful for college athletes, as it will provide them with some guidance on how to smartly and effectively use Twitter as a platform, as well as the potential dangers. Furthermore, information

derived from this investigation will be useful not only for the athlete, but for coaches and staff as well making them aware of both the ability of Twitter to be used as a positive communication and ways to avoid potential negative consequences.

Conclusion

With such an incredible amount of information available to the world, it is a major obstacle to take ideas and concepts and attempt to have people see them. Within the past few decades this task has gotten easier through the creation of digital media. Digital media platforms such as modules and social media offer interactive alternatives for presenting important information to a wide audience, gripping the attention of users and ultimately educating them on most any topic. Through research on the most effective and efficient ways of using digital media to educate others, future work can use techniques such as gap analysis and conducting further research to find the ideal methods for digital education. One method of digital education is through social media apps, which have had an impact on the accessing and sharing of information. These apps have shaped the way that people portray themselves and their ideas online, as well as how they communicate with others. Future work building on the research into the use of Twitter by college athletes can provide a better framework for athletes and coaches on how to best utilize the app. By informing coaches and players, they can use the digital media app as a resource to better their programs and image. Digital media is constantly being innovated and invented, information is being created at an increasing rate. When digital media is used correctly it has the potential to effectively optimize the way that information is shared, accessed, and communicated.

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