Chapter 9
The Stakes of Social Media:
Analyzing User Sentiments

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 context affected the use of social media. Video and voice chat facilitate social interactions during the current social distancing requirements. However, social media creates unrealistic reference points of comparison. The time spent on social media can thus diminish well-being. Researchers and managers aspire to understand how sentiments can control social media. Another research interest regards which techniques create positive sentiments and enhance user experience. This chapter introduces the main stakes of social media, how sentiments change social media, and in turn, social media influences sentiments. The main focus presents a literature review regarding the techniques to analyze sentiments. Finally, solutions and recommendations contemplate the use of social media, for both users and social media platforms.

INTRODUCTION

Natural disasters motivate researchers to analyze users' behavior and sentiments on social media (Gao et al., 2020; Pathak et al., 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the way people used to live and behave on social media (Albahli et al., 2020). The situation heightened mental and physical issues due to diseases and stress (Campbell & Gavet, 2021). Social media gives various ways to communicate and create social bonds. It represents a timely concern to fight against isolation. People spend more time on social media, willing to enhance their well-being and social life (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Nyagah et al., 2015). However, users' perceptions can be wrong. Research has shown that the use of social media enhances signs of depression, anxiety, and sleeping disorders (Milyavskaya et al., 2018; Utz et al., 2015; Verduyn et al., 2015). People tend to do upward comparisons, diminishing their self-esteem whereas most people on social media post filtered pictures (Hamasaki et al., 2009; Muqaddas et al., 2017). In addition, the development of video and voice chat facilitates social interactions, making them more realistic and human. More than text, the voice, and facial expressions enhance sentiments (Dai et al., 2015). Therefore, social media can analyze users' attitudes to improve user experience, and in turn sentiments and behaviors (Albahli et al., 2020). In marketing, researchers and managers can conduct tests to understand consumers' behavior and their level of trust in a brand's message (De Keyzer et al., 2017). Neuroscience and artificial intelligence techniques can analyze users' sentiments and behaviors during their social media experience (Zhang et al., 2020).

This chapter aims at explaining (1) the stakes of social media, (2) the way sentiments influence social media and in turn, social media influences sentiments, and (3) techniques to analyze user's sentiments. The first part presents the background of this chapter, with social media characteristics and the stakes of social media; the second part focuses on social media and sentiments, the type of data necessary to do sentiment analysis, and the techniques of sentiment analysis on social media; the third part suggests solutions and recommendations regarding unhealthy social comparisons and risky behaviors on social media, as well as solutions for social media platforms to develop a user-centric strategy; finally, the fourth part brings out future research directions regarding new ways of conducting sentiment analysis on social media, like media ethnography or neuromarketing, and discusses the role of social media moderators.

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