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Pinterest: Social Media Without the Social Aspect

Intro

When people think of social media, they think of platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat, and Facebook. Pinterest is probably not something that comes to mind right away, especially considering it is the 15th most used social media platform (West, 2024). Pinterest is not high up on the list of social media platforms, however, it is rapidly growing. In the past year, Pinterest gained 50 million monthly active users and has been gaining popularity since its creation in 2009 (West, 2024). Pinterest allows people to share media and creations without the hassle and judgements that sometimes come from other forms of social media. On Pinterest, you can post images of practically anything, pictures you've taken on vacations, previews of blog posts, recipes, crafts you have made, digital art, physical art, and many other things. People are then able to save "pins", or posts people have made to Pinterest, to their boards, typically separated by idea. It is a great way to share your ideas with those around you while receiving ideas from others simultaneously.

Theory

Marshall McLuhan, a Canadian philosopher, is widely known for his phrase, "The medium is the message." This phrase suggests media affects how our brain perceives messages and affects the way we think. McLuhan specifically believed that the media had a negative effect on the way people think. McLuhan spent time asking himself questions about the effects of the

media. He was able to come up with only four different questions that he found could be applied to all media (McLuhan and McLuhan, 1992, p. 7). These questions are now known as McLuhan's tetrads.

These tetrads serve as a vision board or framework used to understand media's effect on people. The four tetrads include enhancement, retrieval, obsolescence, and reversal, which is sometimes referred to as flip. He used these four tetrads to explain what the media does and how it does so. These ideas are used to show what is enhanced, retrieved, reversed, and/or made obsolete by the media (McLuhan and McLuhan, 1992, p. 129).

Analysis: Enhancement

Most pinterest users are such avid fans of Pinterest because it allows people to see and post content, ideas, and images without having to receive rude comments, feel judged, or spend time thinking about the number of likes or followers they have. Pinterest enhances the opportunity to search for ideas without feeling judged, ashamed, jealous, depressed, anxious, or lonely. The main reason many people turn towards Pinterest is to receive inspiration from others in many categories. They could be searching for crafts, recipes, outfits, home decor, and much more. Pinterest enhances media as well in the sense that more forms of media can be posted besides just images. Pinterest allows images, infographics, videos, collages, links to external websites such as blogs or product links, etc (Digital, 2024).

Analysis: Retrieval

Back before social media became a breeding place for bad feelings, it was used to connect with others and keep up with what is happening in their lives. There was an

overwhelming sense of happiness seeing people's posts and life updates. Lately, that feeling isn't as present on other social media platforms since many people feel the need to compare themselves to posts they see. On Pinterest, that feeling of happiness has been brought back. Pinterest sparks joy in people, giving them inspiration to be creative and share their ideas with others without receiving backlash or being worried about judgment from others (Zimmerman, 2023).

Analysis: Obsolescence

One of the downfalls of today's social media is the backlash and hate people receive on their posts. This can come in many forms, both private and public. It can include hateful comments on a post, screenshots of posts being sent in private chats to judge or criticize the person or post, negative posts being made about posts, and many more hurtful actions. Pinterest makes negative responses obsolete. While there are options to like and comment on posts, people utilize these functions to offer tips or give compliments. It is an extremely rare occurrence that negative comments are posted on Pinterest, and if it were to happen, they are typically reported and removed. Another part of social media that has been made obsolete on Pinterest is the care about number of followers. There is an option to follow people on Pinterest, however, it is done for a different purpose than other forms of social media, like Instagram. People follow users who have similar boards and interests. Typically users do not pay any attention to the number of followers they have or the number of followers others have. Pinterest takes away many of the negative aspects of other social media platforms that can cause a hatred for media.

Analysis: Reversal

A common occurrence resulting from the overuse of social media is the lack of face to face social interaction. It could be argued that Pinterest is another form of social media that allows for less in person interaction. Before social media, people bounced ideas off of one another. People received inspiration from books and magazines purchased at stores or checked out from the library. The process of getting these ideas or the materials used to find the ideas all involve human interaction, however, there is no physical interaction when it comes to this form of social media. Pinterest limits the need to interact with others to get ideas. You are able to chat with others and make comments, but it is not similar to talking with someone in person. While Pinterest has numerous pros, this can be noted as one of its cons.

Evaluation

For the most part, Pinterest is a form of media that has positive effects on our minds and the way people think, communicate, and interact. If people shifted their use from Instagram and Snapchat to Pinterest, general happiness would greatly increase. Societal pressures and negative feelings that come from social media would decrease as a result. Pinterest's ability to maintain a positive space for users to share their ideas and creations with others is significant. Pinterest differs from most forms of social media today in a good way and allows for people to still be a part of social media without dealing with the negative side effects that may rise from other social media platforms.

Conclusion

If looking for a social media platform that is a little less intimidating than others, Pinterest is the one. Going off of McLuhan's four tetrads, Pinterest enhances the opportunity to

see ideas and media from other users as well as post ideas without judgment that can sometimes be found on other forms of social media. Pinterest retrieves the feelings of happiness people receive from seeing others posts and makes negative comments and judgment obsolete. Pinterest, on the other hand, can be seen as decreasing face to face interactions. Overall, Pinterest does not negatively affect the way we think, rather it positively affects our moods and interactions with others.

References

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