

Second Annual Social Media Technology Conference & Workshop

Howard University

October 1-2, 2015

Exploring Social Media and –isms

P R O C E E D I N G S

Volume 4

<http://socialmediatechnologyconference.com>

Table of Contents

Social Media meets the University Crisis Communication Plan	3
--	----------

Keisha Reynolds
Norfolk State University

Social Media and Health: A shift from #blacklivesmatter to #blackhealthmatters: Utilizing social media as a health messenger among African-Americans in the public sphere	9
--	----------

Sean Upshaw
Howard University

Social Media meets the University Crisis Communication Plan

Keisha Reynolds, M.A.
Norfolk State University
kreynolds@norfolkcollegiate.org

Abstract. Due to such tragic events that have occurred at colleges and universities, such as the Virginia Tech shooting, institutions have witnessed the usefulness and effectiveness social media played in delivering news and communicating to students in danger. This research examines the use of social media during a crisis situation at the university level. Focusing on two respected universities, Ferris State University, located in a rural Michigan area, and Norfolk State University, located in an urban Virginia area. It evaluates and examines the difference in usage between a predominantly white institute (PWI) and a historically black college/university (HBCU).

Section I: Introduction, Statement of the problem, Theoretical Underpinning and brief Literature review

Social media is now perceived as a powerful communications outlet which has top corporations implementing its tools for the success of business. Scholars now conduct research on its usage, and universities are beginning to offer degree programs in this area. As a result, it is important to note the rapid growth and evolution of social media as a communication medium. Many disasters have occurred since this tool has been established. Journalist have rearranged their storytelling skills to fit into 140 characters or less because many news companies have joined social media (SM) channels to update its audience on news as it happens. Not only have such businesses begun to operate these platforms, but also colleges and universities have begun to use them for swift communication to the university audience. Due to tragic events, colleges and universities have witnessed the usefulness of this tool in delivering news and communicating to students in danger, such as the Virginia Tech shooting (Palen 2008). Therefore, this research examines the use of social media during a crisis situation at the university level. Its attention is on two respected universities, Ferris State University, located in a rural Michigan area, and Norfolk State University, located in an urban Virginia area. This research examines the difference in its usage between a predominantly white institute (PWI) and a historically black college/university (HBCU).

Theory. I identify with George Herbert Mead's symbolic interactionism paradigm and used the constructionist framework. Symbolic interactionism signifies interactions with others as being essential and through it meaning and truth can develop. The society I focused on is university culture, the relationship between administrators and students for the purpose of crisis communication.

Statement of Problem. A difference has been noted in the use of social media as a communication tool between two respected universities. This study examines why there is a

difference and how social media is employed during a crisis situation. It fills the literature gap by focusing on the use of social media for crisis purposes at the university level using a qualitative approach.

Literature Review. The literature that was reviewed for this study included books and peer reviewed articles, which have a direct and indirect influence on my research. Barnes and Lescault (2011) conducted a research project titled *Social Media Adoption Soars as Higher-Ed Experiments and Reevaluates Its Use of New Communications Tools*. These scholars examined the use of social media among the current college generation, known as Millennials. Based on this research, the current college generation has a constant need of being connected and communicating through hand-held devices, while multitasking; Barnes and Lescault (2011) labeled them the “always connected generation” (p. 1).

Leysia Palen (2008) research titled *Online Social Media in Crisis Events*, is a cross-disciplinary study of empirical research, social theory development, and technology design. This is an investigative study which explores the use of social media during two crisis events: The Virginia Tech Shooting and the 2007 Southern California Wildfires. The primary focus Palen (2008) seeks to explore is crisis informatics, “which examines the technical, social, and information aspects of disasters and crises” (p. 76). Barnes, Lescault and Palen’s literature addresses my research topic in a direct yet indirect way, because they focus on the use of social media by higher education institutes but not the use of this tool for crisis communication or within the crisis communication plan.

In 2012, a report was done by CKSyme Media Group in partnership with the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE), which conducted a worldwide survey of higher educational institutions and their use of social media in crisis communications. The report was titled *Using Social Media in a Crisis: Higher Education Results*. CKSyme Media Group (2012) survey of U.S. and Canadian institutions suggest “social media can help mitigate a crisis faster, create brand advocates in the event of crisis, and even help maintain reputation during these critical times. But most importantly, the real-time nature and reach of social media can help institutions be the go-to source of information that stakeholders, the general public, and media look to in the event of a crisis” (p. 5).

Through these literary works it is understood that social media is on a universal scale, and it can aid in playing a vital role to effectively communicate to an audience. Social media is no longer this tool that can be ignored by big businesses or institutions. Therefore, it is critical that colleges and universities employ the use of this tool during emergency events.

Section II: Methodology

I identify with George Herbert Mead’s symbolic interactionism paradigm and used the constructionist framework. Symbolic interactionism allowed this researcher to examine individuals on a personal level. The paradigm is a microtheory which is interested in the individual within society instead of the society at-large. The framework allowed me to use qualitative research methods such as one-on-one interviews, focus groups, surveys, and field observations. This research was conducted at Norfolk State University (NSU), an HBCU, via phone and through Internet portals.

Section III: Findings

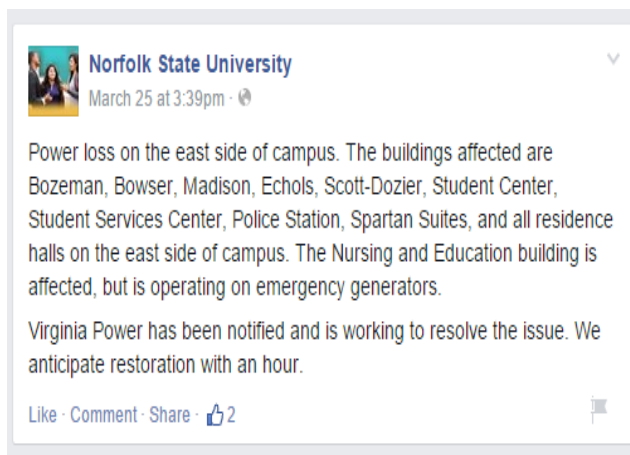
It [social media] is as effective as the pen/pencil was, today. If we don't stay up-to-date we will fall behind. It's the new cutting edge. –Sandy Gholston, News Services and Social Media Manger at Ferris State University.

Both institutions use three common social media channels for daily communication and use during a crisis. Facebook is the primary tool, Twitter follows and the university website is the base. Multiple people are in charge of and are able to post to SM channels at NSU, while one individual is designated as the primary person to post on social media channels at Ferris State University (FSU). Both universities have crisis communication plans in place. However, FSU has a strategic detailed plan, while NSU's plan simply outlines which department is in charge of communications during a crisis. It is to be noted, Ferris State is highly engaged in the use of social media, while Norfolk State is not. The universities are also similar in the following ways: they use the university's website to push out emergency messages along with a text messaging system; most of each institution's emergency messaging is weather related; both institutions agree they need to be more up-to-date with the advancement of social media; and they also agree that SM as a communications tool is important.

FSU and NSU are dissimilar based on its engagement. At Ferris State it is a duty by the News Services & Social Media Manager to interact with users, while NSU replies to very few comments left on its pages due to the lack of a primary monitor of the social tools. FSU has a social media policy in place, while NSU does not. Ferris State has established a post-crisis evaluation plan along with conducting a social media audit to understand who is using the brand name and how (i.e. student organization, faculty and departments). FSU's crisis communication plan also entails a digital component, while NSU hasn't established such a plan.

The lack of understanding by the institution's leadership at Norfolk State plays a primary role in its progress. Ferris State's administration understands the new age of media and they are very hands-on in the advancement of this communication medium, because they understand it is where the university body goes to receive news. NSU's lack is due to its leadership who has yet to tap into the digital age and/or understand the importance of the medium.

Examples of Social Media Crisis Messaging. The universities share similar information across all platforms used during an emergency. Here are some examples of crisis communication messages by each institution.



Section IV: Conclusion

Ferris State University has mastered using social media as an avenue of communication. Norfolk State University has some work to do. NSU's Office of Communications and Marketing staff is aware that there needs to be improvements made for the university to communicate effectively via social media. This comes with practice. One component that FSU does well is prepare for the crises. The institution holds quarterly round-table scenarios with individuals who make up the crisis team. This allows them to take an emergency scenario and work through it within a tight timeframe. All individuals, who make up various university departments, play a part in getting the situation under control. Once the time is up they have to evaluate how they did and what entities could have been done better. This gives Ferris State a leg-up when it comes to crisis communications. Norfolk State should employ this method.

Once the method is employed, it can serve as an avenue of educating other university staff. Since NSU struggles with administration and other influential staff members understanding the true value of social media as an avenue of communications a round-table will allow each department to see the significance of the practices used to effectively diffuse an emergency situation. This is something that Ferris State has found rewarding. NSU should be consistent with engagement and designate one person to control all SM channels. They should also develop a social media policy, conduct a SM audit to see who and which campus departments are using the brand name for any form of communication, and possibly hire a social media director to advance its efforts. Both institutions should expand its knowledge by attending conferences and implementing a content management tool or system, such as Hootsuite or FalconSocial, to enhance its communication and engagement with its community.

Both institutions should also research (survey or poll) the student population to see who is using SM and which channels; how frequently they are using them; and would the platform be a place where students seek information regarding the university. This will increase staff knowledge of which SM platforms are important to its students and where they seek university updates.

I agree with CKSyme Media Group (2012) survey and suggestions of colleges and universities implementing the following five elements within the communication plan to include social media practices: “implement a social media monitoring system; develop a social media policy; implement a social media management system; establish registration or affiliation of campus social media accounts; and establish a community manager for campus social media” (p. 10-11).

This comes with understanding the culture of the campus, which is why a social media audit and student surveys are extremely important. Norfolk State has a few milestones to make before it is at the level which Ferris State is effectively operating; and with the investigation, tools, and suggestions of this research the institution will be able to grow in the right direction.

“Social media is changing the way we communicate and the way we are perceived, both positively and negatively. Every time you post a photo, or update your status, you are contributing to your own digital footprint and personal brand.” - Amy Jo Martin

References

- Aleman, A. M., & Wartman, K. L. (2009). *Online Social Networking on Campus: Understanding What Matters in Student Culture*. New York: Routledge .
- Aleman, A. M., & Wartman, K. L. (2009). *Online Social Networking on Campus: Understanding What Matters in Student Culture*. New York: Routledge.
- Babbie, E. (2010). *The Practice of Social Research, Twelfth Edition*. Belmont: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.
- Barnes, N. G., & Lescault, A. M. (2011). *Social Media Adoption Soars as Higher-Ed Experiments and Reevaluates Its Use of New Communications Tools*. Dartmouth: University of Massachusetts Dartmouth Center for Marketing Research.
- Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method, First Ed.* . Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc. .
- Borad, C. (2014). *Norfolk State University*. Retrieved from College Board, Big Future.
- Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (2000). *Handbook of Qualitative Research* 2nd edition. San Francisco, CA.
- Group, C. M. (2012). *Using Social Media in a Crisis: Higher Education Results*. Bozeman: CKSyme.org.
- Hayes, B., & Kathleen, K. (2013). *Crisis Management at the Speed of the Internet, 1st Edition*. Elsevier.

- Jin, Y., Liu, B. F., & Austin, L. L. (2014). Examining the Role of Social Media in Effective Crisis Management: The Effects of Crisis Origin, Information Form, and Source on Publics' Crisis Responses. *Communication Research*, 74-94.
- Laad, G., & Lewis, G. (2012). *Role of Social Media in Crisis Communication*. Worcester: Gerald Lewis, Ph.D.
- merriam-webster. (2014). *Social Media* . Retrieved from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/social%20media>
- Palen, L. (2008). Online Social Media in Crisis Events. *EDUCAUSE Quarterly*, 76-78.
- Peruta, A., Ryan, W., & Engelsman, R. (2013). Social Media Branding Strategies for Higher Education: Comparing Facebook Pages and Web Sites. *International Journal of Technology, Knowledge & Society*, 11-23.
- Peshkin, A. (1988). In Search of Subjectivity—One's Own. *Educational Researcher* , 17-21.
- Schutt, R. K. (2012). *Investigating the Social World: The Process and Practice of Research, Seventh Edition* . Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Wankel, L. A., & Wankel, C. (2011). *Higher Education Administration with Social Media*. Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

“Social Media and Health: A shift from #blacklivesmatter to #blackhealthmatters: Utilizing social media as a health messenger among African-Americans in the public sphere.”

Sean Upshaw
Howard University
sjrmaine@gmail.com

Abstract:

Social media has become the go-to source where individuals can obtain, share and promote information to enhance the quality of life. In many instances, social media continues to sway public opinion and action through videos and discourse. The recent establishment of Black Lives Matter, a grassroots organization founded on the basis of raising awareness regarding police brutality, educational disparity and social injustice facing the African-American population. Black Lives Matter primary source of disseminating information to supporters consist of Social Media outlets (e.g. Facebook, Twitter) that encourages individual or collective non-violent social action against adversities facing African-Americans. With Black Lives Matter taking center stage on social issues facing African Americans, what about health adversities facing African Americans? This paper will highlight current grassroots organizations that are confronting and changing the health outcome of African Americans through social media. As a result, health professionals will recognize the influence of grassroots organizations as a possible alternative intervention resource for addressing health issues facing African Americans.

Introduction

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950's & 1960's is one of the most prominent social movements. Social issues affiliated with the movement include education disparity, voter's rights, police brutality and segregation. As a result, many African-Americans and other supporters of the movement engaged in public dissatisfactions of African-Americans. Face-to-face interaction and print media (e.g. newspapers, bulletins) mobilized social change for persons of color. Hall (2005) remarks if one desires to understand and recognize the rich literature of the Civil Rights Movement, one must acknowledge the role of narratives reflecting cultural significance in shaping American discourse on human equality. Hall (2015) suggested that communication technology played a vital part in sustaining Black culture as the United States experienced social shifts (Hall, 2015). Fast forward 50 years later, the legacy and purpose of the Civil Rights Movement now birth a new social movement, Black Lives Matter, bringing attention to social conditions that threaten the quality of life for people of color in America using social media a primary source of mobilization.

Black Lives Matter to Black Health Matters

Black Lives Matter creates a social opportunity for African-Americans and other supporters to engage in social activism utilizing technology- mainly social media- as a go-to source for information and social support, empowering Black Culture in the public sphere. On one hand, Black Lives Matter presents itself a critic of the American justice system regarding cases such as Trayvon Martin, Mike Brown and Eric Garner. On the other hand, Black Lives Matter continues to advocate for better social conditions that protect the quality and value of the African-American culture, but what about health? As Black Lives Matter gains momentum across the country, space has been created for health professionals to join in or mirror a similar initiative creating a health-centered focus movement for African Americans titled, Black Health Matters (BHM).

The concept of Black Health Matters(BHM) focuses on health-related challenges facing the African-American population using social media as a form of health communication. Health literacy, health information access and health decision-making are some examples of existing adversities facing African American health care consumers. Health communication is defined as the study of a communication strategy to inform or influence an individual or population decision regarding health (CDC, 2011). Employing health communication as a solution motivate the African American population to adopt and practice a health behavior, long term.

Why Black Health Matters?

Health Information Seeking

The need for Black Health Matters derives as a result of existing health disparities plaguing African-Americans. In 2013, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported eight leading causes of death for African-Americans. Some of the causes of death for African Americans include heart disease, cancer, stroke, unintentional injuries; diabetes, chronic lower respiratory disease, nephritis, and alzheimer's disease (CDC, 2015). In essence, because health disparities for African-Americans continue to threaten the quality of life, requires immediate attention from health professionals, healthcare consumers and health advocates.

Some of the ways African Americans seek health information consists of the Internet or social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter) compared to individuals who use the library as a source of health information seeking (Pew Research, 2015). For example, BlackDoctor.org, a website catering to African-American users of social media provides health information content centered on the Black experience ("Black Doctor", 2015). The utilization of videos, narratives, images and discourse provide opportunists for users to engage with each other as forms of social support and patient empowerment. Consequently, health professionals turn to social media as a secondary outlet for reaching African Americans in a effort to decrease barriers regarding health information access.

Health Literacy

Health literacy is another component aiding the current health disparities experienced among African-Americans that needs further attention. Shea et al., (2004) pointed out that African-American scored lower than Whites on the Rapid Estimate of Adult Literacy in Medicine (REALM). When looking at factors such as education, age and race, Shea et al., found that the REALM scores for African Americans were significantly lower than Whites. Some of the factors contributing to the low score includes economic status and comprehension of medical literature. As a result of the study, patients with lower literacy skills are associated with negative health outcomes such as poor satisfactions with health care and poorer health status (Shea et al., 2004).

Comprehension of health literacy presents itself as one of many barriers of African-Americans, but the decision-making process can negatively impact the health outcomes for Blacks. However, Black Women for Wellness(BWW), a grassroots organization, believe health literacy can equip the African American population through social media to encourage participants to engage in sound decision making about health. Black Women for Wellness (BWW) promotes its cause through social media in three areas. First, BWW encourage preventative care through health literacy in a collaborative method with one's local physician. Second, BWW addresses adversities both health and cultural perimeters impacting the quality of life among the Black population through newsletter, interviews with health and political leaders along with health agencies. Thirdly, BWW inspires the Black population to actively participate in the decision-making process and conversation among health providers to insure their communication needs are satisfied. Through their social media outlet, Black Wellness provides a series of instructional videos, literature and influential messages to it's participants daily. In some instances, participants who interact through discourse act as a form of social support, aiding the popularity and success of the entity currently serving 164,420 participants (BlackWellness, 2015).

Health Decision-Making and Health Promotion

Peek et al., (2008) found that African-Americans have less shared decision-making experience compared to Whites regarding diabetes management. Variables such as trust, respect and reliability contributed to the negative experience of Black patients when engaging in a medical consultation. A shared-decision making process is conceptualized as a process where both patients and physicians share information, express treatment preference and agree on a treatment plans (Peek et al., p.1135). Peek et al., claim that limitations experienced in the decision-making process are related to a power imbalance between Black patients and White physicians (Peek et al., 2008). Conversely, Black Women for Weight lose(BWW), a grassroots organization specializes in promoting healthy weight management and social support for African-American women. BWW illustrate that weight loss and health literacy are vital sources for African American women to combat health issues such as obesity and diabetes to in turn,

promote effective self- healthcare management. Furthermore, BWW cultivate messages that promote health lifestyle and literacy as key ingredients for a long-term success regarding height management (“Black Women for Weight”, 2015). Through social media, BWW believes that implies messages can advance their purpose of making life enjoyable, health-wise, for African American women to appreciate their unlimited potential during and after their weight lose journey (“Black Women for Weight”, 2015).

Conclusion

Social media grants participants various opportunities to promote, share and encourage dialogue about issues that impact their lived experience in the digital age. More importantly, social media equips participants with necessary networking, educational and informative resources to improve one’s quality of life. Such areas like weight loss, health literacy and wellness establish a reflective phenomenon catering to the African American experience. In essence, social media places health in the space where underserved, under represented and marginalized population in the United States to thrive in health.

Emerging themes such as interpretation of health and African American culture, social space and discourse; self-efficacy and African American health narrative transformation dismantles repressive ideology about Black health issues as a continuous problem noted in past health-related research. Each theme reflects the social reality that Black culture experienced as healthcare consumers. Consequently, these ideas can equip health professionals with thick descriptions of understanding health outcomes, sociocultural behavior and communication phenomenon from the lens of social media.

When it comes to interpretation of health and Black culture, African American discourse about health or health related issues places practicality and cultural validation as a vital source of optimizing health outcomes. On one hand it can be argued that health-related trends or shared information about health-related information promoted by African American users of social media can bring applicable change. On the other hand, social media grants a voice in response to health disparities facing African-Americans in creating resolutions that protect and uplifts the societal values of the Black culture.

In the same manner, health professionals have the potential of generating a long-term relationship with African American healthcare consumers through social media. Bachmann and Cantrell Rosa-Moreno (2010) argued that African-Americans are considered to be the most socially and civically engaged population than other ethnicities, especially, among the youth and young adults (Bachmann, Cantrell Rosa-Moreno, 2010). Also, African Americans who engage in social media play a role in slowly dismantling the repressive perceptions of Black health as being a “continuous problem.” However, interpersonal communication influences such as face-to-face, video testimonies and messages about healthcare management are effective in reducing

health disparities. In the digital sphere, the Black health phenomenon takes center stage to inform, raise awareness, connect with others and share lived experiences that tackle each health disparity facing African Americans. As a result, the effectiveness of grassroots organizations' uses of social media to tackle health related issues shows promise for health professionals to use social media that mutually benefit providers and recipients of health care services.

References

Campbell, L. C., Keefe, F. J., McKee, D. C., Edwards, C. L., Herman, S. H., Johnson, L. E., ... & Donattuci, C. F. (2004). Prostate cancer in African Americans: relationship of patient and partner self-efficacy to quality of life. *Journal of pain and symptom management*, 28(5), 433-444.

Black Doctor. (2015). Retrieved from www.blackdoctor.org

Black Wellness (2015). Retrieved from www.blackwellness.org

Black Women for Fitness (2015) Retrieved from www.blackwomenforfitness.com

Hocevar, K. P., Flanagan, A. J., & Metzger, M. J. (2014). Social media self-efficacy and information evaluation online. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 39, 254-262.

Hall, J. D. (2005). The long civil rights movement and the political uses of the past. *The Journal of American History*, 91(4), 1233-1263.

Langmia, K., Tyree, T., O'Brien, P., & Sturgis, I. (Eds.). (2013). *Social media: pedagogy and practice*. University Press of America.

Lenhart, A., Purcell, K., Smith, A., & Zickuhr, K. (2010). Social Media & Mobile Internet Use among Teens and Young Adults. Millennials. *Pew Internet & American Life Project*.

Peek, M. E., Wilson, S. C., Gorawara-Bhat, R., Odoms-Young, A., Quinn, M. T., & Chin, M. H. (2009). Barriers and facilitators to shared decision-making among African-Americans with diabetes. *Journal of general internal medicine*, 24(10), 1135-1139.

Shea, J. A., Beers, B. B., McDonald, V. J., Quistberg, D. A., Ravenell, K. L., & Asch, D. A. (2004). Assessing health literacy in African American and Caucasian adults: disparities in rapid estimate of adult literacy in medicine (REALM) scores. *FAMILY MEDICINE-KANSAS CITY*, 36(8), 575-581.

