

Credocast

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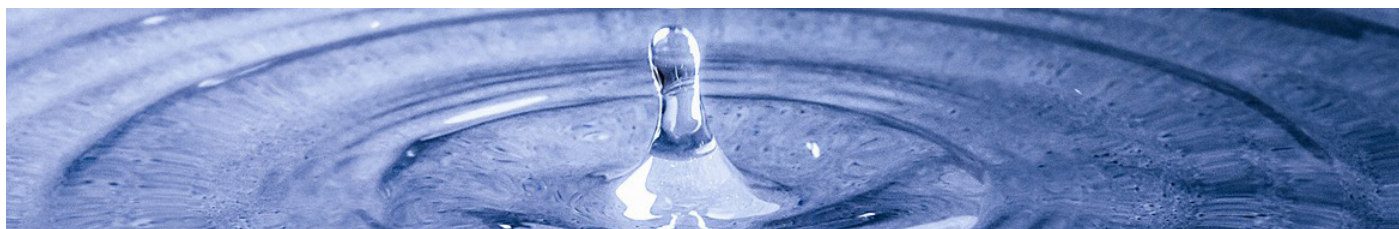
A single social media post can raise global awareness about an issue and even more, effect change.

About Credo Advisory

Credo Advisory is a strategic communications firm that specializes in designing and implementing strategic, operational and tactical communications initiatives. We provide a full suite of communications support to our clients, which include public communications and advocacy, government relations, community engagement, media relations, crisis communications, digital communications and capacity building.

Our mission is to develop bespoke communications products, activities and campaigns based on knowledge, research and industry insights. With our ability to communicate effectively with diverse audiences and stakeholder groups, Credo’s mission is to provide impactful strategic communications advisory from inception to implementation. At Credo, we are committed to improving the way societies communicate.

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“With a 20 percent annual increase in the number of internet users in Africa, the importance of leveraging new media for strategic communications cannot be overemphasized.”

THE SHIFT

Today, new media has become the channel that mediates between organizations and their public. Companies are forced to improve their online and digital engagement with the growth rate of the internet. ‘New media’ can be described as forms of media that depend on technology (smarts phones, computers, etc.) for information dissemination with an objective for end users to not only consume information but to interact.¹ Most visitors spend less than a minute on the average website.² A Microsoft study discovered a swift decline in people’s attention span - now standing at 8 seconds.³ This leaves us with the question – how do we capture and retain the attention of the target audience in a competitive space of over 4.2 billion users in this internet age?⁴

With a 20 percent annual increase in the number of internet users in Africa, the importance of leveraging new media for strategic communications cannot be overemphasized.⁵ As the digital space evolves, new media continues to reaffirm its relevance as an indispensable tool needed for familiarization with current trends and for sustained access to vital information needed for business success, social impact, political influence and so much more.

This thought piece provides a better understanding of new media, its various forms, and ways to achieve best results in engaging with a diverse audience.



¹ Manovich, Lev. (2003) “New Media from Borges to HTML.” The New Media Reader. Ed. Noah Wardrip-Fruin & Nick Montfort. Cambridge, Massachusetts, (22 February 2002) “Turning into digital goldfish” available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/>

³ (June 2016) Decreasing Attention Spans and Your Website, Social Media Strategy available at www.adweek.com/digital/john-stevens-guest-post-decreasing-attention-spans/

⁴ Kit Smith (2019) 122 Amazing Social Media Statistics and Facts available at <https://www.brandwatch.com/blog/amazing-social-media-statistics-and-facts/>

⁵ Simon Kemp (2018) Digital in 2018: World’s Internet users pass the 4 billion Mark available at wearesocial.com/uk/blog/2018/01/global-digital-report-2018

⁶ Brian Neese (2016) What Is New Media? Available at <https://online.seu.edu/what-is-new-media/>

⁷ Described by Vin Crosbie, a new media professor and consultant at Syracuse University, New York

⁸ Crosbie, V. (2002). What is New Media? Retrieved from <http://www.sociology.org.uk/as4mm3a.doc>

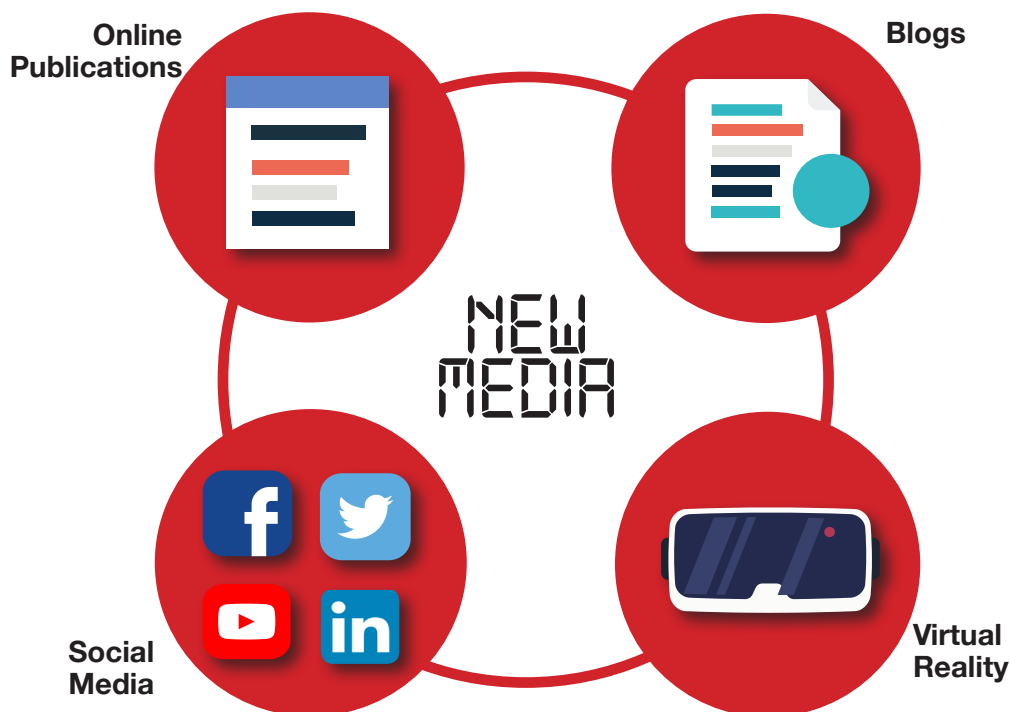
NEW MEDIA IN PERSPECTIVE

New media has provided innovative ways to solve marketing challenges. Robert Logan, a media ecologist and former research associate at the University of Toronto, defines new media as easily processed, stored, transformed, retrieved, hyper-linked and easily searched for and accessed.⁶

There are three kinds of communication media⁷, – interpersonal media as “one to one”, mass media as “one to many” and “new media” as “individuation media” or “many to many”.⁸ New media grants access to digital generative or interactive processes, texts, audio and video. A good example of new media is Wikipedia, a digital encyclopedic platform of knowledge.

“ SEO renders blogs more visible in a crowded web space by exposing them to a wider audience through increased page ranking on search engines like Google, Bing, etc. ”

NEW MEDIA AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS



Blogs

There are several reasons to own and manage a blog in today’s digital world. A blog is a vital addition to any website and will provide a stream of content to share with visitors or information to share on social media, expanding your reach even more.”⁹ Specifically, blogs are online journals or forums that display informative content in a reverse sequential order. For business owners or communicators, blogs are a valuable resource through which their audience can be kept updated on key developments. Through blogging, readers are engaged consistently and interactively with series of discussions on various subjects.

However, for blogs to gain sustained readership, Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is strongly recommended. SEO renders blogs more visible in a crowded web space by exposing them to a wider audience through increased page ranking on search engines like Google, Bing, etc. To achieve this, specific attention needs to be paid to keywords while developing content for the blog. Content curators need to research keywords that are most searched-for and incorporate them in their pieces. For instance, the title of a piece needs to contain targeted keywords frequently entered by potential visitors while searching for content.

Online publications

The emergence of new media has resulted in a significant decline of print publications. This has caused newspaper publishers to develop web versions to complement their print circulation. Advertisers have also turned to new media as a much cheaper alternative, making it increasingly difficult for print publishing to survive.¹⁰ These publications (newspapers, journals, etc.) must now adopt present-

⁹ 2016. Steuer, "Archived copy" (PDF). Archived from the original (PDF)
¹⁰ Tian Zhihui/zhao Fan (2016) The shift from traditional to new media available at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2016-05/10/content_25175270.htm

“ Imagine a real estate developer using virtual reality as their main marketing tool. Prospective buyers anywhere in the world can experience what that penthouse apartment or residential community looks and feels like. ”



day storytelling methods to gain and retain readers and this requires much more than catchy headlines and interesting writeups. As a result, online publications are a vital medium to leverage for strategic communications. They are more easily accessible, without limits to time and space, compatible with audio-visual content and ideal for participative writing. Gatekeeping is no longer limited to editors as readers can contribute to articles as they are published via various feedback features (retweet, comments, likes, etc.).

Virtual, augmented and mixed reality

With the introduction of virtual, augmented and mixed reality, communication has become more exciting and dynamic. Although these innovations appear to be the least explored in today’s corporate world, these tools can alter your audience’s perception and make them feel and respond to your visual designs/marketing. Virtual Reality (VR) can provide a near-real experience. With a virtual reality headset, VR users can navigate a completely artificial and simulated digital environment. Imagine a real estate developer using virtual reality as their main marketing tool. Prospective buyers anywhere in the world can experience what that penthouse apartment or residential community looks and feels like. With this, the real estate market becomes more dynamic and consumer focused with money and time saved.

Augmented reality allows the user to interact with the real world with digital content. It alters the user’s perception of a real-world environment and introduces components of the digital world.¹¹ With this, the healthcare and food industry have been transformed as calorie conscious consumers calculate the nutritional value of their meal just by placing their mobile phone above the food and getting the nutritional information displayed on the screen of their smart phones.

Mixed reality combines the virtual world with the real world. A good example is how Skype works with Microsoft HoloLens which can take someone remote and bring them into a particular space.

These innovations can be used as strategic communications channels in promoting a particular lifestyle, educational/awareness building purposes and product marketing. Virtual reality is already being leveraged in health care as a form of

¹¹ Author Shannon Valentine “As Digital Marketing has evolved, so has the importance of blogging” available at thetypefacegroup.co.uk/the-importance-of-blogging

“When communicating on social media, it is important to do so in the language of your target audience.”

therapeutic intervention to treat anxiety disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and phobias.¹²



Social media

Lisa Buyer a public relations and social media expert, describes social media as today’s most transparent, engaging and interactive form of public relations.¹³ Some social media platforms include Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Skype, LinkedIn and Twitter, etc.

These platforms can be leveraged to create brand awareness, disseminate information, collect customer feedback, to mention a few. Although each platform has its distinct features, it is not best practice to limit them to their current functions because of their dynamic nature. When communicating on social media, it is important to do so in the language of your target audience. Listen and pay attention to what attracts them as each platform has its unique features targeted at a specific audience.

SOCIAL MEDIA AS THE NEW VOICE

Get your story heard

To tell a great story that will capture user attention, you need to evoke emotion and reaction.¹⁴ This emphasizes the importance of social media storytelling. A recent illustration of the power of social media is the Yaba Market March campaign that occurred in Lagos, Nigeria. Due to frequent occurrences of marketplace sexual abuse and physical assault of women, a group of women embarked on a peaceful protest on December 15th, 2018 to address the safety crisis. Social media reaction to this movement started off with a handful of twitter users who shared similar experiences with the hashtag #MarketMarchYaba. A page with user handle @MarketMarch was also created as a contact handle for people willing to support or share their experiences. A growing number of people retweeted, using the hashtag and in no time, it was trending on Nigeria twitter. Reports revealed that within a few days, women began to shop freely without fear of being harassed.

¹² Gonçalves, Raquel; Pedrozo, Ana Lúcia; Coutinho, Evandro Silva Freire; Figueira, Ivan; Ventura, Paula (2012). “Efficacy of Virtual Reality Exposure Therapy in the Treatment of PTSD: A Systematic Review”. PLOS ONE. 7 (12): e48469. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0048469. ISSN 1932-6203. PMC 3531396. PMID 23300515.

¹³ Heidi Cohen (2011) Social media definition available at heidicohen.com/social-media-definition/

¹⁴ Angelina Harper (2018) How to Tell A Story on Social Media That People Will Share available at blog.planable.io/social-media-storytelling/

“It is also helpful to note that posting interesting and factual pieces increases your chances of success as a brand on Twitter while on Instagram, maintaining a defined theme with consistent activity strengthens your online profile.”



With the help of social media, significant awareness was raised. Toni Tones, a social media influencer with a massive following, scheduled a meeting with Mrs. Dolapo Osinbajo, wife of the Vice President of Nigeria, to discuss ways in which the government could support the cause.¹⁵

Identify your audience, use the right platform

As stated earlier, each medium has its major audience. For instance, a photographer's channel of communication should be more on Instagram, Pinterest, and Facebook while thought leaders can leverage mainly on Twitter and Facebook. However, if an audience is more video-focused, building a YouTube channel would be an added advantage for promotion. Written content attracts engagement on Facebook, Twitter, and Reddit.¹⁶ For professionals looking to expand their network, LinkedIn is highly recommended. It is important to know what platform your intended audience engages with the most for best results. It is also helpful to note that posting interesting and factual pieces increases your chances of success as a brand on Twitter while on Instagram, maintaining a defined theme with consistent activity strengthens your online profile.

Tracking and analytics

Organizations use social media monitoring tools to analyze online conversations on the internet about their brand, products or related topics of interest. This can be useful in public relations management and advertising campaign tracking to measure return on investment for their social media advert spending, organic growth, competitor-auditing and public engagement.¹⁷

¹⁵ (2019) Dolapo Osinbajo, Toni Tones collaborate on 'Yaba Market March' available at www.pnnewsnigeria.com/2019/01/18/dolapo-osinbajo-toni-tones-collaborate-on-yaba-market-march

¹⁶ Alex Humphries (2018) How to Find Out Which Social Media Platform Your Audience Is Using available at <https://www.business2community.com/social-media/how-to-find-out-which-social-media-platform-your-audience-is-using-02105137>

¹⁷ Available at en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_media

“ Online influencers have become powerful figures in today’s social media. This form of marketing relies on influential individuals with a strong online presence and impressive following. ”

At Credo Advisory, we understand the importance of social media when implementing an initiative, event or public campaign. Social media has given us the platform to create awareness and promote events for our clients. For example, Credo worked on a recent Presidential commissioning of the Ariaria Independent Power Project under the Federal Government of Nigeria’s Energizing Economies Initiative focused on providing clean, safe, reliable and affordable electricity to economic hubs across Nigeria. Credo’s team ran an aggressive social media campaign to raise awareness on the economic and social impact the project was already having on micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. The campaign ran on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram and increased our client’s following and gained significant impressions on Twitter. On the day of the Presidential commissioning, the event hashtag (#AriarialPP) trended for the entire day.

Social media marketing

Social media marketing has increased due to the growing active user rates on social media applications. One of the main objectives is to interact with the audience to gain feedback or prompt some action.¹⁸ For example, placing an advert on Facebook’s newsfeed or Instagram story can expose it to a larger audience to amplify brand awareness; users are able to like, share and/or make comments. Audience feedback surveys can also be conducted via this medium.

Influencer marketing

Online influencers have become powerful figures in today’s social media. This form of marketing relies on influential individuals with a strong online presence and impressive following. They are engaged by marketers and organizations to promote and endorse products, people or initiatives on their social media platforms. These influencers create engaging content for their followers, with the aim of creating awareness and increasing sales of the promoted brand, if the case may be.

CONCLUSION

New media and its various forms have provided billions of users’ endless engagement opportunities. From networking and advertising to research and learning, new media can be leveraged strategically both as an information/engagement resource and analytical tool – to track, measure and communicate impact. Blogs as a content streaming platform that allows interaction with your audience, online publications also described as web version of print publications which are even more easily accessible to virtual, augmented and mixed reality best described as innovations that alter your audience perception of reality. Remember, in conducting social media activity, it is important to identify target audience and key interests as a vital criterion for success in any social media campaign effort.

¹⁸ Chaffey, Dave; Ellis-Chadwick, Fiona (2012). Digital Marketing (5th ed.). Pearson. pp. 30–31. ISBN 978-0-273-74610-2.