Convergence and Communities

Personal and Professional online representation

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The convergence of identities and the communities in which we matriculate is subject to change. This is due to how online societies are constantly shifting by way of technological advancements, interpretation of online identities, self-representation, online spaces, and online cultural expectations. Convergence is an essential part of digital cultures “without convergence, the very notion of an information society would be difficult to comprehend” (Miller, 2011, p. 72). Social and digital interactions have become part of our day-to-day lives, which makes these topics very important to be able to project and protect our online presence.

I am a rarity because the online identity of Mary Schmitt verses Mary K is one in the same because who I am personally is who I am professionally. Most often, people refer to a brand as the logo and positioning statement of the organization. I learned through previous courses that it is the experience that the brands create which are “essentially perceptions and emotions. They are the feelings and associations that come from interacting with a product or service” (Jones, 2012, pg. 11). Simply put, I am a brand. My self-representation is a radio personality with a bright, bubbly, and fun-loving persona. This includes being passionate about music, the arts, women’s rights, being motivational, and wanting to engage with listeners. Besides, I am a strategic communicator both personally and professionally because of interests and passions. My objective is to always protect the brand. Therefore, there is no difference in who I am online and my regular self because the scrutiny of society and my employer. Knowing this information it will lead you to brand authenticity, brand consistency, brand loyalty, and brand affinity. I believe that through various mediums of communications I can shape the message and the audience. Strategic communications is to have “the purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfill its mission” (McArthur, 2014 p 7). So everything I do is almost planned and calculated. In crafting digital messages the role of strategic communicator is to guide the brand on the critical points for a consistent internal and external messaging strategy. This means the responsibility entails that there is no variance of the delivered messaging and when something is messaged incorrectly the strategic communicator in their role must eliminate any discourse. Also, I understand that “so-called individual identities have always been socially constructed and managed. But online identity formation needs to be looked at on its specific terms” (Reed, 2014, p. 55). Therefore, I want to be able to control my narrative.

Digital diversity is vital to me in the spaces I inhabit online because I feel it keeps me balanced. I am active on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and within my blog posts for my radio station WTUG. These platforms generate the most connections and engagements of all social platforms for my online identity. I am committed to brand building for myself and my radio stations because “when you commit to your brand identity internally and sear it into your customers’ minds clearly and consistently, the value proposition and points of difference of your brand become unmistakable and unforgettable” (Yohn,2014, location 3436). My second-tier digital spaces where I curate content and connections are on the WTUG app, Twitter, Snapchat, Fitbit YouTube, Pinterest, and SoundCloud. Even though these channels do not render the most activity, I found I can push engagement with listeners over to the tier one social channels. This leads to more activation for my social channels as well as the social outlets for WTUG.

My hopes and fears are rooted in the inclusion and exclusion of my cultural expectations. I would state that my on and offline identities self-adhere to my cultural expectations. I hope that everyone is included and/or that everyone is respectful of various cultures. However, I know that is a false reality in the world we live in. The digital divide is an example where we think everyone has equal access, but there is “gap between those who do and those who do not have access to computers and the internet” (Miller, 2011, p. 98). The challenge to depart from my cultural expectations in my mindset is that I have given up on the hope for everyone to be treated fairly and equally. Another example of my cultural expectations is within the radio industry. I hope to have equal balance of men and women in the industry. The WMC - Women’s Media Center is very passionate about the imbalance of portrayal of women in media, including television, radio, film, podcasting, social media, video games, print, and other media sources. For women like me that serve as Program Directors, the MIW viewed this category has the “greatest challenge for women in radio management continues to be in the area of Program Director. Women currently program only 10.6% (1,139 stations), and that percentage has basically remained flat for the last twelve years” (MIW, 2019, para. 7). Therefore, my cultural expectations self-adhere to my on and offline identities, because the quest for women in radio to have equality, is within my personal and professional cultures.

In conclusion, it is essential to have a clear direction in your online identity because it only takes “seven seconds for someone to form a first impression” (Graham, 2014, para. 1). Knowing the online spaces you dwell, how you self-represent and understanding the differences between your online self and regular self all contribute to a successful online presence. These factors are essential and will help you determine if your online best practices.

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