On Behavioural Responses and Different Shades of Flaming in Social Media and Computer Mediated Communication

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ABSTRACT

Computer mediated communication has connected the globe in such a way that today the whole world connects with a common thread. It has broken all cultural, social, religious and geographic barriers bringing the world at a zero distance level. Unfortunately, among its innumerable advantages, online communication has developed a darker side to it called flaming. With the freedom that online communication offers, the users have started infiltrating conversation with hostile and offensive exchange of words. Due to the absence of face to face interaction, there are various factors such as anonymity, lack of familiarity, absence of social cordiality and etiquettes that promote flaming. This study takes a look at the social context in which flaming occurs. This paper involves a study conducted on one subject in a confined environment. It focuses on the flaming tendencies and patterns. An effort is done to analyze the factors that affect flaming. The response of the online users on current and controversial issues is recorded. It is generally the sensitive issues that attract flaming. Also non met friends have a tendency to shed their inhibitions and involve blatantly in flaming. Another observation is that the male gender has more inclination towards flaming and involves more in contemptuous comments. The Probit Model is used to analyze the recorded responses and draw the conclusions.

KEYWORDS

Computer Mediated Communication (CMC), Facebook Friends (FBD), Flaming, Non-Met Friends, Probit Model, Social Media, Social Networking Sites

INTRODUCTION

Flaming is defined as hostile communication between the internet users. Though the immense benefits of computer mediated communication cannot be denied but at times such volatile expression results in incivility which falls short of a seasoned conversation. Due to the absence of face to face interaction, online communication often involves some assumptions and motives of the user which result in unfavorable dialogue. There is lack of individual concern for social evaluation and sanction. There is back and forth interaction among the users whose personal perceptions and unbridled opinions are expressed without any consideration of the interests of others. Deliberate flaming results from discussions getting emotional on topics that are controversial. In today’s digital age, Web 2.0 is the way of communication on the Internet. Communication has taken on a new role of knowledge exchange. The successful and unsuccessful cases of informal learning in training processes on the
Social Web Platforms are a fertile area of study for the editors (Garcia-Penalvo, Colomo-Palacios & Lytras, 2012). A Web 2.0 tool IM-TAG, based on semantic technologies is used for informal mentoring. This tool records the personal competencies of the mentee and recommends the mentoring content and opinion tagging. (Colomo-Palacios et.al., 2014) These discussions get heated and result in angry exchange of words. Flaming is total nonconformity to perceived norms, conventions and tenets of communications. “Discussions over the internet can also take an uncivil route, with offensive comments or replies impeding the democratic ideal of healthy heated discussion (Papacharissi, 2004; Shils, 1992). An online discussion starts in a rational manner, people start expressing their viewpoints, rising in difference of opinion but that unfortunately results in polarized opinions among difference audience segments. Different opinions result in hot exchange of words, hostile messages and uncivil behavior due to which the basic thread of conversation gets fizzled. This gives opportunity to that strata of online users whose intent is mischievous and only goal is to indulge in flaming and distract the normal mode of discussion.

Importance of CMC

Pre internet models of communication are classical, unidirectional models of information. People receive, evaluate, and resend forming a linear pattern of communication. The days when a social movement or any such national or international issue relied on newsprint or press conferences to disseminate information are over. Traditional news travels in a linear way but online media expands information, sending it in multiple and random directions. Online communication has an edge over any other mode of communication because of its ability to broadcast information to a large and diverse spectrum of people and gather a rich repository of opinions. Computer mediated communication breaks all cultural, social, religious and geographic backgrounds to offer an even platform globally for sharing information. Online communication is to find, engage, involve, argue resent, approve and not essentially derive a conclusion. Computer mediated communication enables individuals to make informed decisions by providing knowledge and facilitating elaboration on diverse issues. A standard tenet of any communication program is a formal exchange of opinions, ideas and information. Online media maintains this tenet with the pace, scope and impact which is much more dynamic. The internet is the medium of this age for collaborating and sharing real time information. It provides a perfect platform for creating feeding and sustaining information. There is so much advantage that computer mediated communication offers to the society. It has totally changed the traditional mode of communication. The general public irrespective of their power, position or status can express their opinions with full honesty without any inhibitions. The voice can be heard be heard at large. The common man does not need to cross any intermediate channels to put his viewpoint across. It breaks all barrier of hierarchy. In the true sense, it creates an even platform globally for information and communication. But history has proved that all boons over a period of time, develop a flip side. This communication freedom has been struck with flaming. Flaming is a pattern that tends to plague virtual communication with messages that are hostile, offensive and blatantly rude. It ends up trading insults in a common forum. At times, the discussions result in polarization of viewpoints which result in flaming and ultimately kill the conversation that could potentially enable elaboration. Flaming negatively affects the quality and quantity of information and misdirects it. When there is difference of opinion among the users, the resentment is expressed in overstated language which results in flaming.

Concept of Flaming

Increased disinhibition online is negative consequence of freedom of communication over the net. The authors of (Dunn & Rogers, 1982) described disinhibition as a product of reduced If-awareness which should lead to less concern about the judgment of others. It is lack of restraint which is manifested in disregard for any etiquette in social conversation. There is very less concern for self-presentation or the judgment of others. Suler (2004), suggested that several psychological factors lead to online disinhibition: the anonymity of a web pseudonym; invisibility to others; the time lag between sending
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