

Social Interaction Design

An Introduction to SxD

Adrian Chan
Gravity7.com



What is SxD?

- Design of social media
 - Involves all web design disciplines: User Interface, Interaction design, Experience design, Information Architecture
- Social media include networked applications that permit direct and indirect, private and public communication and interaction
- Social media platforms may be computer-based or mobile, even game platforms
- They engage the participation of users
- User participation produces mediated social practices



Social media

- Social media are reshaping the marketplace for information and knowledge, goods and services
- They supplement marketplaces with the power of communication
- Communication unfolds in the form of conversations of varying depth, reach, and speed
- Relationships inform the availability and value of information
- All of which is changing the way our culture produces and consumes value
- And presents a challenge to mass media and the organization of conventional media-based marketplaces



Social media

- Social media are not just websites, but are dynamic social systems
- Their User Interface is a Social Interface
- Their content is people
- Their people are contributors
- Their contributions communicate
- That communication is a form of talk
- That talk is informed by design



The trade: Social Media



Socializing Media

- Social media = paradigm shift in marketing and advertising
 - consumers participate in production and messaging
 - messages are their own, and have authenticity
 - using their relationships and social networks for communication
 - on the basis of their own interests
- How social media structure and organize talk changes branding, marketing, and advertising
- At stake is how markets produce and consume value



Socializing Markets

- Social media cultivate culture
- Social media socialize consumption
- Social media democratize production
- Social media proliferate communication
- Social media network audiences
- Social media relationize connections



How is SxD different?

- Social Interaction Design approaches social media are “talk systems”
- SxD shapes, informs, organizes, structures, and arranges this talk
- Web 2.0 designs social applications for a flourishing culture of new content, new navigation, new audiences, new relationships, new purposes and uses
- A shift to transactions as ongoing communication
- A shift of focus from user practices to social practices
- Emphasis on social practices as byproduct of design and informed, not controlled, by design



SxD in theory



Main concepts

- Users of social media have:
 - the ability to become self-involved online, and to relate through social media to others (mediated presence)
 - expectations of future interaction (commitment)
 - a sense of self and a (self) perception of how they look to others (validation)
 - an intention to sharing their professional and/or personal interests (social motivation)
 - relationships they maintain online (social networks)
 - trust and confidence in the system (competence)



Interactions = Social

- Conventional user interaction and user interface approaches address the user's interaction with the device
- The designer designs the screen
 - The interaction is User—Software
- The Social Interaction Designer also designs beyond screen
 - The interaction of User—Software —User



User Needs = Interests

- Shift from task and goal-oriented transactions common to traditional software use.
- Non-social software: users have needs
- Social media: users have interests
- Social media are relational media: users are interested social participants
- Users not satisfied by success in discrete transactions and actions, as in non-social software
- Users sustain interest in own participation
- Social media: emphasis on sustaining participation, communication, and interest



User Needs = Interests

- The user's psychological interests include acknowledgment, recognition, membership, attention, respect, attraction, citation, compliments, pleasure, self-satisfaction, popularity, etc, and the avoidance of risk, failure, embarrassment, disappointment, etc.
- The user's communicative interests include visibility, attention, organization of place and form of communication, etc.



The mediation

- Technical media transform talk in significant ways
- Modern technologies permit us to transcend physical presence and stretch relationships across time and space
- Social encounters, as communication in (inter)action is disembedded from place and time
- Communication is not an *immediate and direct* handling of statements and relationship
- But is *mediated and indirect* transposition through a means of production and distribution
- Online social interaction is a mediated, compressed, and asynchronous experience



The communicative

- The medium screens out affective and communicative face to face cues
- Its mediation of communication decouples the utterance from the act of uttering
 - Communication is captured and re-presented using text, images, video, audio
- Interaction is decoupled from its performance
 - Interaction is captured and re-mediated asynchronously



The sociological

- Our understanding of user behavior and social practices benefits from the insights of psychology, communication, and social theories
- Online social interactions are a new kind of talk
- The social is a figment and an effect of individual user contributions
- It is observed, tracked, and re-presented through usage and data
- The togetherness of social media is simultaneous and co-present but always interrupted, stretched, disassociated
- Social forces and power are transformed by mediation



The psychological

- Psychological views of identity, the Self, interpersonal relationships, and the organization of social encounters provide key insights
- Psychology offers insights into how users relate to others, be they familiar or unfamiliar
- Is valuable to understanding the user's interest in private and public relationships and communication
- Helps us to value the ways in which users fashion themselves through their online profiles and contributions
- And how they might become engaged in perceptions, projections, anticipations, and expectations



The temporal

- Social media organize time
- Our experience of social time is episodic, eventful, and has duration
- In communication, it may be deferred, interrupted, stretched, or cut off
- We relate to this kind of time with anticipation and expectation
- Social activity is temporal, has pacing and rhythm, speed and intensity
- Any social technology structures time and is fast, slow, near, far, and so on



The paradigm



Shift of paradigm

- From individual users to social practices
- User provides content, and content is people
- Grounded in the personal, biographical, and the everyday
- Personally and socially meaningful activities and mediated forms of talk and interaction
- New modes of organizing attention
- New forms of value and differentiation
- New channels for messaging
- New means of capturing audiences



The Social Paradigm

- User as a social Self
- User as self-interested and interested in others
- All activity is social (visible to some others)
- Interaction is Participation
- Participation is a form of talk
- Talk has new forms and languages
- New forms include posts, comments, reviews, ratings, gestures and tokens, votes, links, badges, video
- New forms are distributable and communicable



Social is represented

- Social media must create and represent social interaction and community
- There are no direct faces or interactions -- only text, images, video, audio, and structured activities captured in media of re-presentation
- Users behave according to what they believe is going on and what they believe matters to the audience
- Users establish a relation to the audience and community based on its users, themes, and identity



Social Interaction

- In any social encounter a participant seeks to know:
 - What's going on?
- If the interaction is familiar, s/he will have a sense of:
 - How to proceed
 - What to do next
- Users of social media obtain this from the participation of others on the site



It's all talk

- Talk is addressed to an audience, of one, two, a group, or a public
- Codes and forms of talk organize social media
- Talk is direct (to addressee) or indirect (in front of audience)
- Communication technology publishes and archives pages, posts, comments, and media
- Interaction technology captures and transmits direct interactions: IM, direct messaging,



Themes

- The identity of a social media service is thematic
- Themes communicate What's Going On which tells users How to proceed
- Career networking and passive job search
 - Dating and flirting
 - Verticals: music, movies, books, pets
 - Shopping, reviewing, “best of” and “new”
 - Classifieds, listings, marketplaces
 - News, feeds, press, blog coverage



Activities are Social

- Social media are designed around social activities
- Activities structure the talk and the action
- Activities use participants, context, themes
- These organize who talks, about what, what happens, when and how frequently, for how long
- All of which must be represented meaningfully
- And which must be self-sustaining and alive



Actions are social

- Social action common to social media is linguistic, communicative, representative, attention-getting, inviting, participatory, and responsive
- These are social acts and action (organized in activities)
 - Ask, question, query, solicit, hint, wink, imply...
 - Recommend, suggest, offer, declare, promote, advertise...
 - Review, opionate, show off, rant, challenge....
 - Rate, rank, affirm, confirm, accept, approve....
 - Favorite, tag, bookmark, link, share....



Assembling audiences

- Social media capture audiences
- Their challenge is to produce active and participating audiences
- Around themed, topical, product or market-oriented content
- That is largely produced and consumed by the system's members



Organization

- The system organizes interaction through its
 - Presentation of users (personal, professional, etc.)
 - Their contributions (conversation, opinions, announcements, etc.)
 - Layout and navigation (focus on people, posts, media, etc.)
 - Use of representations and visual languages (tokens, icons, gifts, products, lists, etc.)
 - Management of time (fast, slow, ephemeral, archived, etc.)
 - Representation of collective use and community



Forms

- Social media borrow from common cultural forms
 - Fashion, news, politics, entertainment, etc.
- These forms arrange and organize information, events, and participation
 - Which organize how we talk about and show: success, celebrity, popularity, news, trends, relevance, etc.
- Each social media system is unique in its forms of talk and formats of representation



People are Content

- Social media make users visible through their contributions
- They structure those contributions so that the system reproduces itself out of its own participating members
 - Communication is content
 - Contributions communicate
 - Contributions create navigation
 - Social navigation communicates



Engagement

- Social media engage not just by capturing attention but by engaging the psychological: users become self-engaged
- Users are interested in their appeal to others
- Users are sensitive to audience response
- Users are interested in their success and popularity
- Users seek acknowledgment and reciprocity
- All of which motivate their participation



Presentation of Self

- The user's participation in online media is informed by his or her sense of self and self image
- Individual users actively create, maintain, tweak, and monitor their online Self
- They have a self interest in seeing their online presence acknowledged and reflected
- They use social media as an extension of themselves, often telling about and narrating biographical details and reflecting how they would like to be seen
- May be sensitive to self image, self perception, acknowledgment, status, position, success, and so on



Social Presence

- Social presence is about seeing and being seen
- Any social presence sets up the need to negotiate and handle presence availability (to others)
- Presence can be maintained with a persistent online profile
- Messaging and updating lend presence greater immediacy
- Presence tools vary in their organization of self talk, updates, distribution
- Presence tools vary in their handling of interaction, communication, and availability



Paradoxes

- Social = anti-social
- Communication = non-communicative
- Self = Self Image
- Other = Imagined Other
- Presence = Absence
- Identity = Changing
- Personal tastes are highly social
- Utility can be useless



Practicing SxD



SxD: The palette

- Design of the UI for social interface
- Design of the application for social interaction
- Design of communication for user generated content
- Design of navigation for social and cultural tastes
- Design of content modules for social navigation
- Design of interaction elements for social practices
- Design of media types for new forms of communication
- Design of interaction tools for new kinds of social practices



Functional dysfunction

- What functions is sometimes dysfunctional from a conventional software perspective
- Communication and interaction are more than efficiency, effectiveness, and success
- What is ambiguous compels
- What is withheld piques curiosity
- What is deferred sustains interest
- What is substituted feeds the imagination
- What is unclear solicits communication and help



Design levers

- Design of the screen (first order) shapes overall user activity and community (second order)
- Social interaction design anticipates second order effects and outcomes of UI, IA, interaction design choices
- Social interaction design is indirect, informing, structuring, ordering, and arranging
- Individual user actions and activities add up to social practices
- It's the interactions among users that design informs
- Social interaction design is the application of levers to steer and guide emerging social practices



Users Own It

- The social media application platform is not in our hands — it must be handed over to users and the community of users
- Shift of thinking from “what it does” to “what users do with it”
- Users need to feel that it is theirs, need to own it and their relationship to it
- Create the system so that it can become what it will mean to each user, and as a result, service the community



Attention economies

- The attention economy addresses online activity
- It wants to capture user interest and attention
- But it is difficult to measure attention as a quantity
 - does the user communicate it? to whom? how often?
 - does the user respect and like it? really? how much?
 - does the user return for more of it? frequently? for the same amount?
- Attention spent on a brand, a thing, event, or even an idea belongs to one kind of attention economy



Attention economies

- On social media, the economy of attention is measured by interest
- Attention in social terms is quantity but also quality
- Interest in social terms is not a thing, it's a relation
- Relations have intensities, direction, flux
- The attention that matters in social media can include:
 - communicability; taste and preference; leadership and deference; trust and respect; authority and credibility; etc.



Call to action

- Call to action is not always the conventional call to action
 - call to action is social
 - is often contributed (written, posted) by users
 - can be a call to interaction
 - can be a call to participation
 - can be a call to communication
 - can be a call on the attention of other users
- Galvanize users to continue to create content that serves to mobilize others to do the same



Appealing to the Other

- Social media content must help users appeal to each other
 - Personal style, online profile, character and personality
 - Appearance, looks, pictures, poses, qualities
 - Knowledge, know-how, expertise, credibility
 - Informal social position by friends, network, popularity, testimonials, compliments
 - Formal social position by profession, rank, status, accreditation, employer
 - Social capital by value to users and community



Common practices

- Social practices emerge on social media as use becomes another way of maintaining and participating in relationships
 - Tell by posting
 - Show by uploading
 - Talk by commenting
 - Seek by querying
 - Ask by questioning
 - Opinionate by blogging
 - Associate by tagging



Types of talk

- Different kinds of talk form different social practices, identifiable by their common interactions, balance of private and public, levels of participation, etiquette, seriousness, formality, and more
- They shape the degree to which users refer to and involve themselves as real people in communication
 - Confessions, biographical and personal profiles
 - Flirtations, compliments, friending,
 - Advice, recommendations, reviews
 - Opinions and discussions



Windows and Views

- Views of information, stats, traffic, and activity measure, describe, and show user and audience participation.
 - Views create aggregate perspective
 - Users look at views
- Windows containing user generated content are a selection of relevant contents
 - Windows contain
 - Users look through windows
- Users take interest in others
 - clickthroughs, rating, favoriting, friending, tagging, etc



Reflections and Mirrors

- Social media show users their own activity back to them
- Reflections show users their presence to others
 - Users are interested in how they appear and how they appear to others
- Mirrors show users their reflection
 - Users need to see themselves represented
- Users take interest in themselves
 - numbers, ranking, ratings, votes, friends, testimonials, lists, gestures, winks, compliments all reflect upon the user



System Feedback

- It's necessary to show users their own actions, particularly the social consequences and reception of their actions
- Users need to establish trust in the system's own functions and features
- Users want to feel competent users of the system
- The system's feedback is confirmation of their actions and recognition of their competence
- Much system feedback is provided by other users, displayed and organized by design



Transference

- In the absence of immediate response and reaction to user participation, users invent and project their interpretations and assumptions
- Self involvement and involvement in others is mediated and engages projection and introspection
- Projective: seeing
 - Commenting, rating, digging, favoriting, tagging
- Introspective: being seen
 - Blogging, recording video performances, journaling, profile maintenance and tweaking



Projection

- Users will project the other's intentions, motives, interests, desires, skills, and other attributes based in part on *what they hope for or wish to see*
- Users particularly project into ambiguity and communication and when user identities are concealed or only partially revealed
- Projection can result in users over-communicating and over-compensating
- Projection may be more Other-oriented



Introspection

- Some social media user practices primarily engage the user with him or herself
- In these kinds of activities, users become involved in their own ideas, perceptions, interpretations, and assumptions
- Introspection can result in users engaging primarily in telling about themselves and crafting an online persona
- Introspective activities may appear as a distant and anti-social performance
- Introspection may be more Self-oriented



Social networking

- Social networks are the maintenance and sustaining of personal and professional relationships on social media
- Social networks limit content access to known, familiar, and trusted associations
- Relationships embody trust in the first degree
- Relationships extend confidence in the second degree
- Social networks expand content access while limiting results



Distribution

- Some social media are built as destination sites and “walled city” domains
- Some social media extend their presence through widgets, badges, and shared data beyond their domain
 - to the desktop
 - to mobile
 - to other networked devices



Folksonomies

- Flat and non-hierarchical navigation through content categories, labels, and tags that reflect their popularity in use
- Self-reinforcing associations as use by communities of users privilege tags used most
- Provide a view of the values and selections most popular among users
- Permit change and news to continually reach the surface
- Are a snapshot in time and are thus current



Mini Me-dia

- Mass media inform the content and organization of social media
- Cultural and social references and presentations are readily available in the mass media and by virtue of digital distribution are easily quoted and repurposed
- Social media are user-centric
 - Personal is news
 - Person is privileged
 - Personality is popular



Trends: to date

- Web 1.0: publishing
 - information was evergreen
 - users browsed and searched
- Web 2.0: I can publish too
 - users create their own home pages
 - and socialize them with friends
- Web 3.0+: we talk
 - the web goes social
 - communication is embedded in all web, distributed to all devices



Trends: the future

- Faster and lighter applications and tools
- Higher presence and immediacy of the user
- Niche social networks
- Fewer new attempts at all-in-one destinations
- Branded social media and social media brands
- Recognition by mass media, increasing assimilation and integration
- Distributed and widgetized
- Non-browser based apps widgets and mobile

