The Ethics of Social Media Networks From the Ethics of Content to Ethical Design: Facebook as a Model

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Numerous scientific studies and press articles have addressed the topic of social media ethic, and suggested a group of regulations for the credibility and accuracy of information and data circulated. However, these regulations are also meant to guarantee that specific groups of people are not offended by the content or subject to any slander, defamation or discrimination.

Here, we can define the three levels of social media ethics: the ethics of specialised media publishing on social networking sites, the ethics of the personal use of social networking sites by media professionals, and ethics of the general public›s use of social networking sites. This shows that there are different perceptions of social media ethics. For example, while media institutions are primarily concerned with maintaining their reputations and professionalism by regulating the relationship of their staff with social media platforms, intellectuals and the general public are concerned with ethical tendencies in the traditional sense i.e. general ethics for the general public, and social media websites are concerned with the comfort and safety of their users to guarantee the attractiveness of their services. Nonetheless, these ethics, which the study calls «communication content ethics», are insufficient because firstly, they are based on the false assumption that users of social media platforms are able use them consciously and correctly; secondly, social media platforms were designed in an unethical manner that supports the commercial inclinations of their owners at the expense of users' interests. Thus, the research proposes the ethical redesign of social media platforms to provide individuals with a context that guarantees freedom of use and facilitates ethical uses and choices at the same time. In addition, the research discusses some of the problems associated with this proposal, while presenting practical examples and models for the ethical design of Facebook, as it is the most widely used social networking platform.