Designing Social Media for Change

Abstract

Social media is becoming ubiquitous in today’s society. We are seeing social media as a design mechanism to promote behavior change. Further, Social media has been credited with organizing large populist movements such as Occupy Wall Street and the Arab Spring. And social media is influencing human behavior in various domains including healthy living, environmental sustainability, collective action/activism, and other areas such as education/learning and consumer behavior. This workshop will explore the design of social media systems that aim to change behavior, and challenges around the design and subsequent evaluation. Further, the workshop will explore how best to evaluate human behavior in the uptake of the social media as well as ways to tease out reasons for any observed behavior change over other confounding factors.

Author Keywords
Social media; persuasion; behavior change; design

ACM Classification Keywords
H.5.m. Information interfaces and presentation (e.g., HCI): Miscellaneous.

General Terms
Design, experimentation, Human Factors
Introduction

Social media technologies include online social networking sites such as Facebook, microblogging services such as Twitter, Internet forums, collaborative projects such as Wikipedia, content sharing communities such as YouTube and Flickr, social games, and social blogs. These technologies are ubiquitous in today's society. Social media has a committed and engaged user base with hundreds of millions of daily active users.

Social media technologies are leading to changes in human behavior, as well as organizing people to take collective action. They initially allow for opinions and information to be diffused quickly, but also allow for dialogue to occur, which can lead to action [10]. Researchers are investigating how social media can be designed to influence behavior in many domains. Researchers and practitioners are building and studying social software to promote health and wellness [3-5], to encourage environmentally sustainable behaviors [7], to promote collective action [8,9], to foster consumer engagement [6], and to promote learning [2]. Across these areas, researchers are finding that social media design techniques such as sharing information, competition, and feedback through commenting are leading to change.

Social media has been central to large populist movements [10] including environmental action, Occupy Wall Street, and the Arab Spring, which is demonstrative of its ability to organize groups of individuals participate in collective action. Even within movements such as Occupy Wall Street, they are designing separate social media to meet the needs of the protesters [1]. However, with these populist movements, questions arise about the role that social media truly played. Social media was perhaps instrumental in how people organized; however, the collective action may have occurred regardless of social media.

We will explore design and evaluation of various social media applications for change. We will also explore methodological techniques for evaluating social media design. Further, we need to better understand human behavior in the uptake of social media and in the subsequent behavior change that occurs. Finally, how do we evaluate the contribution of social media for the offline behavior? How do we tease out other confounding factors?

Approach

The approach that we will take is to look at three main areas of social media for change: design, human behavior and evaluation.

Design

We will look at the development and evaluation for the design of various social media technologies. The technologies within the social media domain will be inclusive of traditional Internet forums and blogs, but will also include online social networks, microblogging, content sharing communities, and social games. Further, the design should be aiming to influence certain human behavior offline. The behavior can include (but not limited to) healthy living, environmental sustainable behavior, collective action, education or purchase of consumer goods. The design principles that lead to change will be brought out.
Human Behavior
Designing technologies for persuasion can only be done by better understanding human behavior. We will look at how social media technologies are adopted and used. This includes an understanding of how participation in social media leads to change offline. In the area of social media organizing individuals, we will also explore how activism or slacktivism develops. By slacktivism, we refer to low cost online changes that show support of certain causes, such as greening of profile picture in support of Iranian elections [8, 10]. We also need to better understand how users adopt new offline behaviors through participation in social media. We will consider how both individual and social factors play into behavior change through the use of social media.

Evaluation
The evaluation of social media’s ability to change health behavior is challenging. Often, there are other confounding factors that are truly behind the effects. We need to look at evaluation methods that control for external effects. Furthermore, we need to adopt methods from behavioral economics to allow us to conduct experiments for evaluating the role of social media in changing human behavior.

Workshop Goals
This workshop has three main goals. First, we want to explore the application of social media for change within the context of Human Computer Interaction (HCI). Within this goal, we will explore the design of social media for change in the various domains, which can help the HCI community to expand this research area. Further, we can build on each other’s research in design of social technology and human behavior.

The second goal is to exchange expertise to expand the potential scope of social media for change. We look to invite participants from various backgrounds to better understand the nuances of design, human behavior, and evaluation.

The final goal is to explore other areas of research that have not yet been considered. Various academics, policy makers and industry leaders are exploring the field of social media. Through this workshop, we can start to have a discussion that will explore areas of research not considered, but are deemed important through discussion.

Topics of Interest
We invite contributions from various domains that include (but not limited) to the following:

- Design of social media to promote healthy living
- Design of social media that promotes an environmentally sustainable lifestyle
- Design of social media for participation in collective action
- Design of social media to promote learning
- Design of social media to cultivate consumer engagement
- Understanding human behavior for uptake and participation in specific social media technologies
- Understanding change of human behavior through participation in social media technologies
- Understanding evaluation methods for social media technologies’ ability to change behavior

Participants & Expected Community Interest
The workshop will invite participants from diverse areas. Specifically, we will invite participants from both
academia and industry, who are working in the area of social media. The area of both HCI and Persuasive Technologies has had an increase of publications in this area. The HCI research through both CHI and CSCW is increasingly looking at how social media technologies are being designed to influence behavior [7,8]. Similarly, the Persuasive Technology community is also increasingly evaluating social influence within the design of social technologies [5,9].

The surge in social media uptake and subsequent collective action has lead to mainstream media and public interest in this emerging area. With the ability for previously inactive people to mobilize with little central coordination has lead to large-scale movements such as Occupy Wall Street and the Arab Spring. Through these visible examples of social media as a change agent, we expect that participant interest will be high.

Further, this area spans various domains including health, sustainability, e-learning, political science and communication. Through this inter-disciplinary interest, we can obtain a clearer picture of how social media can be designed for change.

References