Reflection #1: Hyperpersonal Communication and Instagram Spam

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With the advancement of technology, computer-mediated communication (CMC) has become increasingly popular; allowing people to communicate with each other through the internet. Cues filtering out theory indicates that CMC communication may have a negative impact given the absence of tone of voice and action. However, Walter suggests an alternative, that online communication may be positive through the affords that communication technology carries (Walter, 2015). Using a hyperpersonal model, it can indicate how individuals can better communicate online.

Hyperpersonal communication refers to a model of interpersonal relationships on the web that is a step further from the social information processing model. Internet users find ways to compensate for the lack of non-verbal cues, such as the use of emoticons, the spelling of text, and other ways to facilitate communication. A hyperpersonal model consists of four main parts; the sender, the receiver, the channel, and the feedback loop. It theorizes that CMC is better than face-to-face communication and builds a level of intimacy. At the same time, asynchronicity and editability allows for more time to think and editing content, thus reducing the obstacles in communication. Therefore, through bandwidth, synchronicity, and editability, people can experience a more positive communication model than face-to-face communication.

In hyperpersonal communication, the senders usually have the choice to present themselves to the receivers, such as professional, friendly. These motivations can be positive; through the affordances of communication technology, people can hide their weaknesses and show their strengths to make a better impression on the receivers. Walter states that senders often carefully edit their messages to deliver only the cues they want to deliver, even leading to deceptive behavior (Walter, 2015). Using a personal anecdote, a stranger messaged me once using Instagram saying she was a painter and expressed an interest using my own feed as inspiration for incoming projects.

Her message was written in a very friendly manner, with emoji added to the text. The homepage was also carefully edited as she posted a lot about art.

The second component is the receiver who receives the message and interprets it through the available nonverbal cues. In the process of interpreting, we tend to fill in the missing information with idealized guesses about the other person. This can lead to the formation of idealized impressions of each other, resulting in a more overall positive view (Antheunis, et al., 2020). Because we cannot see the facial expressions and behavior of the person, we tend to think highly of them. After receiving her message, I felt happy because she complimented my photos and inquired about me in a very polite way. While I could not know her fully, the message was presented as sincere, and I had trust in her thinking that she was an artist and came to me with sincere intentions. At the same time, I had some level of doubt because I had never encountered anything like this before; being unaware of potential danger.

The third part is the channel, where the identity of the receiver and the sender are swapped as the communication goes on, the receiver will reply to the message and become the sender. The most important things are asynchronicity and editability, which allow the sender to take time to edit the text before sending the message, thus ensuring that the message was polished before responding. Through this example, once I had suspicions, I had the time to think about the veracity of what the other person was saying. Asynchronicity and editability allows me to verify the person's message and edit my response carefully.

The last part is the Feedback loop, the time when the sender and receiver continue to communicate this positive feeling repeatedly. This positive attitude promotes better communication and keeps the good impression. In my case, I did not experience an increasingly positive impression because, during the loop, I had come to realize that she was a liar. Although

the hyperpersonal model indicated that a positive cycle would be formed, my impression of her kept getting worse during this feedback loop.

To summarize, my observation of the hyperpersonal model does enable people to communicate positively. The absence of non-verbal cues allows people to have a more idealized view of each other, thus creating a positive impression. However, I also feel that unlike face-to-face communication, information on the internet can often be misleading and deceptive. Because of editability and asynchronicity, people can craft their words to lie or cover up their flaws. Through my personal example from Instagram, I realized the unreliability of communication through the Internet. This kind of communication is likely to lead to deception and therefore, I believe the hyperpersonal communication is not better than face-to-face communication under select circumstances.

(781 words)

References

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