

The Study on the Changes in Communication Patterns in the Mobile Age

Hyo-Jin Hong

Abstract—This study found the changes in the communication environment in the mobile ages. First, since the pattern of communication between the government and the citizens has switched to listening and sympathy. Second, The patterns of communication between businesses and consumers have shifted to communication focusing on story-telling and creating. Third, communication patterns between individuals have shifted to information-seeking and fun-seeking.

Keywords— Business, Citizens, Communication, Government, Individuals, Mobile

I. CHANGES IN THE COMMUNICATION ENVIRONMENT IN THE MOBILE AGE

THE communication environment has gained stronger personalization and mobility because the mobile Internet environment has improved and mobile appliances have become ubiquitous. In fact, the subscribers of the “walking PC in hand” smart phone service surpassed 30 million in September 2012[3]¹. Furthermore, with mobile communication-based social network services developing rapidly, individual users have become the center of various complicated relations formed with other users.

The ubiquity of information services has been strengthened as anyone can instantly produce, circulate, and consume the desired information anytime, anywhere thanks to such development of mobile technologies. In other words, unlike in the past when news or information was accessed with a single device, information can be easily obtained through various platforms including mobile applications, portals, and blogs. Therefore, more diverse entities produce and consume information, enabling laypersons to form public opinion.

Various entities produce various news and information. “Publizens” (Publicity+Citizen)² -- who publish their own thoughts or experiences via online articles, photos, or video clips -- have emerged. The boundary between media and audience has become blurred since anyone with interest in the given topics can contribute to information production. Furthermore, power bloggers with over 10,000 visitors a day

wield considerable influence on businesses or among netizens. In fact, quasi-professional bloggers have formed a commercial media force by uploading specialized articles by subject (IT, finance, travel, or sports).

Because of such diversification of entities producing information, the agenda setting power³ has shifted from mass media to individuals. A few elite groups used to produce and diffuse information when the conventional mass media led the communication environment, including television, radio, newspaper, and magazines. In the mobile communication age, however, individuals influence agenda setting substantially as power bloggers, Internet columnists, or other individuals lead public opinion, which used to be shaped by conventional mass media. Since laypersons can easily produce contents using smart appliances, issues that emerged in social networks are often reported by mass media – the opposite of the previous information flow. In fact, CNN, BBC, or other conventional mass media often utilize contents produced in social media as information sources[1]. In particular, owing to the nature of social network services, i.e., communication is realized using short text messages, users’ burden to write a long article is eased. Such phenomenon is said to be attributable to the fact that contents can be produced so easily.

On the other hand, information diffused among people connected with social networks, circulating speedily and extensively. In other words, the growth of social network services has streamlined the stages of information circulation, accelerating information diffusion across national, racial, or social group boundaries. In fact, articles uploaded to personal blogs are further diffused by Facebook or Twitter.

In addition, the time required for the delivery or diffusion of information has been reduced since strangers can communicate with each other through social networks. There have been many cases wherein social reforms were induced by the speedy propagation of issues of a given country to the entire world through social networks. Leading cases of social reforms triggered by social media include “Jasmine Revolution,” which induced political reform, and “Save KPK, Save Indonesia” as an anti-corruption campaign. Furthermore, information can be easily shared and propagated since a single click is all it takes to recommend information to others. Typical examples are Facebook’s “Like” button and Twitter’s Hash Tag.

In particular, changes in the communication environment have enhanced the social media’s functions of diffusing

³ Before mass media informed the public through its coverage of specific issues it selected through newspaper, broadcasting, or magazines.

Hyo-Jin Hong is with the National Information Society Agency, NIA Bldg, Cheonggyecheonno 14, Jung-gu, Seoul, Republic of Korea(corresponding author’s phone: 82-10-2415-1129; e-mail: hhyoj@nia.or.kr).

¹ Source: Korea Communication Commission, Supply Status of Smart Phones as of September (September 2012)

² A new word made by coining “Publicity and Citizen,” meaning those who publish their thoughts or episodes in daily life by writing or through photos or video files [6]

information while diminishing the conventional mass media's functions of relaying public opinion⁴. Real-time upload and feedback increased as time or space restrictions have been removed in the general public's production or circulation of information, thanks to the ubiquity of mobile appliances. Thus, the oligarchic structure of information distribution – which has been led by journalists or elite groups -- has switched to a decentralized one participated in by an indefinite multitude.

II. CHANGES IN COMMUNICATION PATTERNS BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND CITIZENS

Changes in the communication environment have triggered the shift in communication patterns between the government and the citizens from retroactive delivery to communication based on listening and sharing.

In the past, communication between the government and the people focused on the unilateral delivery of information concerning policies that have already been decided. The previous governments were more interested in the process of policy development and execution rather than the process of decision making. In short, the communication channel was limited to a system of "government spokesperson and people" depending on the mass media. Since the pattern of communication between the government and the people has switched to listening and sympathy, however, more citizens directly participate from the stage of policy agenda exploration or setting. Their ideas and opinions are reflected from the early stage of policy development, surpassing the level of simple information sharing since they directly raise issues, assert the need for policies, and develop alternative policies. Thus, opinion leaders have increased their influence, whereas the government's exclusive monopoly over information or policy development has declined.

In particular, the spread of social media has distributed the leadership in terms of public opinion among individual citizens while eroding the agenda-setting right that has been monopolized by government authorities or expert groups. Government-operated websites or blogs as communication channels between the government and the people in the Web 1.0 age had a limited effect in terms of message propagation since the people merely left comments upon visiting them. In contrast, the social media that has been diffused based on the Web 2.0 platform has greatly amplified individuals' influence in agenda exploration or setting. This is because the social media facilitates the instant production and circulation of information easily in daily life without any considerable effort to express opinions. Information and public opinions consolidated by indefinite multitudes through social networks are delivered to listening to public opinion and securing understanding of policies and sympathy from the people have emerged as an essential stage in developing policies because communication patterns change between the government and the people. In fact, policymakers more often derive sympathy through interactions, forming relations by meeting the people face to face or offline. Accordingly, the people often refused to accept unilateral

policies, thereby intensifying the need for agreement between the government and people on policies to secure justification and driving force for implementing policies.

III. CHANGES IN COMMUNICATION PATTERNS BETWEEN BUSINESSES AND CONSUMERS

First, the communication pattern between businesses and consumers has shifted from fact-oriented sharing of information concerning products and services to story-telling-oriented communication to gain sympathy, changing with customers because of the recent changes in the communication environment.

In the past when consumers had limited options in terms of goods, businesses concentrated on the means of communication to secure perception when advertising the features of their products. With consumers having wider options and raised expectations, however, the business-centered, one-way communication has switched to communication based on emotional sympathy on matters of interest to customers.

To develop bonds of sympathy with consumers under the new communication conditions, businesses focus on forming loyal customers differentiated from others by telling unique stories about them. In other words, they try to persuade the customers to buy their products by helping them understand through story-telling that can stimulate sympathy and emotion toward the business and products[4]. Businesses and their customers develop a bond of sympathy through dialogues based on emotional sympathy on trivial daily issues and light, contemporary stories.

Second, because of the changes in the communication environment, the patterns of communication between businesses and consumers have shifted to communication focusing on story-creating wherein consumers are induced to create stories about businesses or products for themselves. The essential elements of story-creating are communication and listening. In other words, there is a need to discover "stories" that businesses can contribute to society and consumers. It is important to communicate based on customer participation, including endeavoring to listen to stories created by consumers with serious consideration given to "how to listen."

Customers may empathize with business values through story-creating-focused communication between businesses and consumers. They may also develop favorable perception and feeling with regard to businesses and their products[5]. For story-creating-focused communication, businesses should listen to consumers' stories from the stage of product planning and design. In doing so, businesses can secure earnestness as well as a framework for recruiting supporters or friends. Furthermore, a new market can be created as customers voluntarily talk about their experience with given brands and actively deliver stories about the businesses and their products to other customers.

⁴ Source: "Diffusing Social Media and New Business Communication Strategies," Donghun Lee, et al (2010), Samsung Economic Research Institute.

TABLE I
CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN BUSINESSES
AND CONSUMERS

Characteristics of conventional business communication	Characteristics of new business communication
Product-centered – marketer-centered	Sympathy-oriented – customer-centered
Push message	Pull message
Targeting (demographic)	Public Interest (issues of public concern)
Perception – Attitude-centered objectives	Sympathy – Experience-centered objectives
Via media communication	Direct communication (1 : multitude / multitude : multitude)
One-way	Two-way
Communication (delivery-centered)	Conversation (dialogue and feedback)
Fact	Story

IV. SOME CHANGES IN COMMUNICATION PATTERNS BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS

First, because of changes in the communication environment, communication patterns between individuals have shifted to information-seeking communication wherein individuals actively produce or circulate information to obtain information that is more refined than that provided by mass media. Individuals are now actively seeking information through personal media and Internet search to obtain more detailed information speedily than information or news provided by mass media. In particular, multitude communication has become possible thanks to the active growth of social network services. Social issues can be transmitted faster than through conventional mass media.

Second, communication patterns between individuals have shifted to relation-oriented communication wherein individuals share information concerning issues of mutual concern by transcending space limits. An environment for forming new human relationship has been created, thanks to the development of digital technologies. This is because social network services enable total strangers to connect and dialog with each other on one common issue. In fact, a survey revealed that 69.3% use social media for “networking with others.” On the other hand, it has strengthened the tendency of concentrating on dialog or formation of relations between individuals expressing mutual interest rather than on the volume or benefit of information. In fact, people believe that communication on Facebook or other social network platforms is beneficial to individuals shunning communication with “known persons.”

Third, communication patterns between individuals have shifted to fun-seeking communication that reveals the personality and sense of existence or provides pleasure so that greater sympathy can be generated. The main trend has switched

from serious logic-oriented communication to new communication means that stimulate emotion or induce more earnestness by rendering seriousness or authenticity in the process of communication. In fact, people produce and share contents or have dialog using smart phones or digital camera instead of acts or experiences that they could do alone in the past. Many people actively react to fun as many devices have been made available to express sympathy, including technical devices provided by social media to express sympathy such as link, comments, Retweet(RT), Like, and Share.

TABLE II
CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS

Characteristics of conventional individual communication	Characteristics of new individual communication
Voice-centered	Text consisting of characters and emoticons
Relations of unity based on kinship or geographic or schooling backgrounds	Loose relations based on issues of diverse personal interests
Information protected based on specific relations	Propagated information sharing and emotional sympathy
Existence of time or space restrictions on information propagation	No time or space restrictions on information propagation
Passive emotion expression	Active emotion expression
Centered on logic and seriousness	Centered on emotion and earnestness or truthfulness

V. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The communication environment has changed -- including the means of information production and circulation -- as information ubiquity has been strengthened by the development of mobile technologies.

Furthermore, communication patterns between the government and citizens, businesses and consumers, and between individuals have changed because of the changes in the communication environment. Below are our suggestions for changes in communication patterns by communication entity.

First, there is a need to enhance the communication ability of policymakers focusing on sympathy and listening while preparing a forum for public debate from the early stage of policy development according to the changes in communication patterns between the government and the people. In other words, the ability for two-way communication with the people based on logic and emotion is essential to the success of government policies. Government officials need to take the attitude of listening to the voice of stakeholders while inducing their participation instead of simple one-way message delivery. Furthermore, they need to exercise delicacy so as not to cause misunderstanding in using emotional words or slogans while delivering facts logically.

Second, businesses should enhance their capabilities to improve the quality of communication with consumers according to the changes in communication patterns between businesses and consumers. Businesses should view such

changes as opportunities for growth. Likewise, businesses should set the direction of communication with their customers and should have capabilities to perform the role of curator of business information and media. Toward that end, businesses should prepare guidelines for minimizing the risk that may arise in communicating with consumers and should share related know-how. Moreover, businesses could create new ideas through activities of analyzing and predicting the lifestyles of consumers using big data produced by the consumers.

Third, individuals should strive to minimize the side effects of social media, what with interpersonal communication propagating through social media. In other words, efforts should be made to prevent “non-communication” [or lack of communication], including abuse of anonymity and bias or distortion of information behind diversified communication as the affirmative effect of social media. Toward that end, the sense of social responsibility should be strengthened for not only opinion leaders shaping public opinion but also all users of social media. Furthermore, support should be provided to the development of technologies for protecting the basic rights of the users and development of industries dealing with information security solutions.

REFERENCES

- [1] Donghun Lee, et al(2010), Samsung Economic Research Institute, “Diffusing Social Media and New Business Communication Strategies,” W.-K. Chen, *Linear Networks and Systems* (Book style). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1993, pp. 123–135.
- [2] Elater, J.(1998), ‘Deliberative Democracy’, Cambridge University Press. Smith, “An approach to graphs of linear forms (Unpublished work style),” unpublished.
- [3] Korea Communication Commission(2012), “Supply Status of Smart Phones as of September”
- [4] Michael Porter(2011), ‘The Role of Business in Society: Creating Shared Value’, Harvard Business Review
- [5] Roger Schank(1995), ‘Narrative and Intelligence’, Gary Saul Morson
- [6] Washington Post(24 July 2006), “See me, Click me”