



Chronology in Social Media: Linear Media and Non-linear Postings

Maja Tabea Jerrentrup*

Film and Media Department, Ajeenkya DY Patil University, Königswinter, Germany

*Corresponding author: Maja Tabea Jerrentrup, Film and Media Department, Ajeenkya DY Patil University, Königswinter, Germany, Tel: +491777759971; E-mail: maja.jerrentrup@adypu.edu.in

Received date: Apr 24, 2020; Accepted date: May 04, 2020; Published date: May 10, 2020

Copyright: © 2020 Jerrentrup MT. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Citation: Jerrentrup MT. Chronology in Social Media: Linear Media and Non-linear Postings. Global Media Journal 2020, 18:34.

Abstract

Profiles on social media accounts suggest a chronology – yet one sees numerous discontinuous postings. Based on the observation of Instagram accounts, this article will first look at the types in which discontinuity is evident and then focus on the motivations for it, among them the striving for variety and at the same time regularity in postings to please the followers, but also the expression of partial identities, the understanding of the account as personal, rewritable diary, the connection to the own past, and the composition of the personal timeline according to one's own stream of consciousness. The article moves on taking into account possible effects on or interactions with the individual psyche and the society as a whole.

Keywords: Social media; Instagram; Photography; Self-portraiture; Linearity; Discontinuity

Introduction

The chronology is not chronological – the order of photographs in personal accounts on social media does not follow a linear order that corresponds to the chronological sequence, but is often rather bent and twisted, sometimes circular, sometimes seems to have time lapses. This is particularly noticeable with postings that are based on photographs: even if it is not indicated by the account holder one can figure out that there is no clear chronology when e.g. looking at the entire or larger parts of the profile. This article deals with three aspects: First, it shows how discontinuity can be detected. Then, the focus is on motivations, i.e. the question of why people do not always structure their personal account chronologically as suggested by the mere term “timeline” and by the order in which pictures are shown. Thereafter, the question arises of how the discontinuity could affect the actors in social media and ultimately, the wider parts of the society.

Social Media and Their Benefits

Social media such as Instagram can be understood as “highly interactive platforms via which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content. Given the tremendous exposure of social media in the popular press today, it would seem that we are in the midst of an altogether new communication landscape” [1]. Probably it's most striking and typical feature is that – opposed to most “traditional” media – the content is generated by the users themselves, all of them can be producer and/or recipient.

In social media, people communicate through their usernames, photographs, and other information that they provide about themselves [2]. There is great heterogeneity in the way users are community-oriented and how they enact roles and construct meanings [3]. Frequently, people connect with others they know only casually or not at all, but have found them through hashtags etc. – however, even thin social bond can be also beneficial [4]. Sometimes a lot of information is disclosed by users, which might make them appear more credible, but at the same time puts them at risk, e.g. for identity theft: “As a result, users are motivated to learn an SNS's privacy norms so that they know how much to disclose to appear likable while avoiding the risks of overdisclosure” [5]. For successful communication – achieving the goals one has in mind – some social media literacy is necessary.

Together with many other studies [6,7], this article is based on the uses and gratifications approach. According to Jan Kietzmann et al. [1], social media serve various functions: they help to show presence, to share content, to build relationships, to communicate identity, to engage in conversations, to form groups, and to work on individual or group-related reputation. Aqdas Malik et al. [8], provide an overview of previous studies and show which factors underlie the use of social networking services, including affection seeking, attention seeking, disclosure, entertainment, habitual past-time, information sharing, social influence, and social interaction. Following Sheth et al. [9] categories of values that influence the consumer choice behaviour, Petri Hallikainen distinguishes a.o. the social value (if the user acquires value from associating with social groups and maintains one's social images through the platforms), the emotional value (if desired

emotions are aroused), and the epistemic value (if the use arouses curiosity, provides novelty or knowledge) [10].

As a result, it can be said that social media should be valuable for its users and that, in consequence, the users are motivated to take part in them. Several of the values Kietzmann, Hallikainen, and Malik mention relate more to the situation of reception or production. The following observation inevitably relates more to the role of the account holder than to his or her followers, however, both influence each other and every account holder is most probably also a follower of others.

Observations on Instagram

The considerations are based on observations on Instagram, since this is a particularly image-based medium. We started a new profile and followed 30 accounts with free access to make sure that the account holders aim at a wider public and that no ethical dilemma arises. To select these profiles, we took the list of most common given names in Europe on Wikipedia and looked for male and female names popular in Austria, France, Germany, Spain, and Switzerland, since these are big European countries and we are familiar with the languages spoken in there. As for the United Kingdom, Wikipedia distinguished various areas, which made it more difficult to select names. However, the popularity of a name does not necessarily mean that the account holders originate in these countries and only

few people indicated their home country or city in their profile.

Since the list published on Wikipedia refers to rather new surveys, our sample is probably comparably young, but as statistics show, Instagram is anyway more popular among young users [11]. The account holders mostly did not indicate their age, but it is assumable that they were between around 18 and 45 years old, probably most of them between 18 and 30 years. 15 account holders were women, 15 men.

The accounts we considered had between about 200 and 150,000 followers and evolved around the account holders themselves, such as their travels, their clothing styles, tattoos, hairstyles, handicrafts, etc. Consequently, they deal with the life of the person in question or at least the aspects of her life that she would like to disclose in public. We did not select accounts dealing with political or highly current topics, or that were very commercial. At least two third of the pictures should show the person herself, since a person's life should be in focus. It turned out that none of the accounts was exclusively devoted to one topic, but usually covered several connected to the person's life.

We looked back on the last around 100 pictures posted by the person. We did not consider stories because stories are often used to either communicate immediately with the followers or try to popularize to photographs posted in the profile (**Table 1**).

Table 1: The chart shows which topics were treated by the accounts.

Accounts dedicated to	Number (n=30, multiple choices possible)
Clothing, Style	23
Travelling	22
Family, Relationship	18
Hairstyles and Colours	14
Tattoos, Piercings	12
Hobby Modelling	12
Hiking, Nature	11
Fitness, Sport	11
Handicrafts, Art	11
Home decoration	10
Festivals, Parties	8
Life with pets	8
Food	8
Make-Up and Skin Care	7
Dance and Acrobatics	6
Yoga and Mindfulness	5

These topics cover typical areas of life that have visual features and therefore can be easily photographed. Social desirability may also play a role in the selection of topics, since

most account holders also have potential followers in mind. However, it should be kept in mind that this touch of "quantitative" analysis still implies a qualitative judgement

[12]: therefore, we can neither guarantee if our selection is representative nor that in our interpretation, we have always hit the topic meant by the account holder.

Due to their ubiquity, social media are said to be “an unmatched resource for research” [13], especially, as “important resources for those who study geographically disparate or hard to reach populations” [14]. Around 50% of the profiles in the sample used English text, however, some of them were not native speakers. As mentioned, few indicated their country or city. Therefore, more extensive quantitative surveys would be needed to make any connections between the origin of the account holder and the frequency of discontinuity.

To gain further insights, we later contacted the account holders and sent short surveys. These surveys were answered by seventeen of the account holders. This relatively low number can be explained in various ways: eventually our messages were filtered as spam or the people did not have time to answer. Maybe, they also found the topic a bit sensitive as posting discontinuously could be interpreted as inauthentic – even though we guaranteed them anonymity.

Detecting Discontinuity

Let us now consider the chronology and the ways in which it is changed. First of all, one can distinguish between discontinuities that are addressed directly by the account holder and those that are not mentioned respectively explained. In the first case, the person in question either states that it is a repost, or writes that she is just remembering the moment recorded in the photograph, or creates another connection to the photograph that she identifies as “old”. However, there are also examples of accompanying text that leaves it rather open, e.g. the text “Forever blending into flora” under a photograph, that was posted discontinuously – the “forever” seems to take the picture out of the time continuum.

In other cases, the discontinuity is not addressed at all – that is, the photo is either posted without any text or with text that does not give a clue about the continuity, e.g. a descriptive text, a poem, or some thoughts that seem to be loosely connected to what is shown. Therefore, discontinuity often only becomes obvious to the recipient if she remembers the person and her story well or accidentally recognizes something in the picture that does not fit into the present. As a result, one cannot tell how many photos are actually not posted chronologically. However, based on these photographs that are clearly non-chronological, we can estimate that it affects at least around 5-10%, for some accounts significantly more, for others hardly any. It could be many more, though.

If pictures are not described as “reposts” or “old pictures” – how can one conclude that they are not shown in a chronological way? There are various indications for the phenomenon:

- Exact reposts: Even if not stated, it is obvious if the same picture or an extremely similar has been posted before.

- (Semi-) permanent visual features: Especially haircuts and colours give clues about the chronology as it is very unlikely to change the colour and lengths to another and back within a very short period of time. The chronology becomes even clearer in the case of tattoos. Body-related topics such as hair styles and tattoos are very often addressed in the profiles, and thus, the more noticeable are discontinuities. But also special make-ups or face paintings, as well as very special outfit combinations that are probably difficult to repeat, indicate discontinuity.
- Impossible time sequences: Closely connected to the just mentioned aspect of “(semi-)permanent visual features”, certain other time sequences are at least quite unusual or unlikely, such as a constant commute between two distant places, especially if the time between two posted photos is too short for the corresponding trip.
- Age and stages of life: In adults, signs of age are rather difficult to evaluate as an indicator – first, one rarely ages very quickly within a few years, and further, many uploaded photos are obviously filtered or edited to remove the traces of age. However, it is often much easier to recognize the age of family members such as children or to identify the age of pets. This also refers to pregnancy pictures: if these are mixed in after the corresponding pregnancy, or while being pregnant pictures with a flat tummy are occasionally shown it is obvious that the postings are discontinuous.
- Motif and style of photography: In some accounts one can see stylistic changes with a look at the photographs, which suggest that some pictures were e.g. taken by a professional – usually there is also a corresponding tag or link. Of course, it is conceivable that the account holder meets the photographer more than once, but if the motif is similar in addition to the style, one can assume that the photos are from the same shoot. Looking at the respective photographer’s account gives further hints.
- Location changes: Occasionally, changes in the location can be recognized by looking at the account of the person concerned. This includes redesigns of the account holder’s own premises, the move to another place, but it can also refer to public locations, for example if one sees a building in the background that had long been torn down or repainted at the time of posting.
- Events: Another aspect is events, from which one can sometimes easily find out when they took place. The non-occurrence of events also plays a role: at the time of the corona crisis, larger parties were prohibited in many European countries - anyone who showed pictures of such parties at the time apparently posted old picture material, and anyone mixing such pictures in-between pictures addressing the crisis obviously posted discontinuously.
- Relationship to weather and seasons: Here, too, discontinuities become apparent when people mix in pictures that do not match the current seasons or show a weather situation that indicates an earlier point in time.
- Relationship to Instagram stories: The stories can also indicate that photographs in the profile are posted discontinuously.

- Own knowledge: One last option would be personal knowledge, e.g. if one was involved in a meeting and therefore can tell that it is posted in a discontinuous way.

For more than half of the photos in the sample that were posted discontinuously, this was not marked – and there is certainly still a high number of cases that we could not uncover. In most cases we could detect discontinuity by exact reposts, (semi-)permanent visual features, and impossible time sequences, sometimes several of these aspects applied simultaneously.

Motivations for Discontinuity

Discontinuity on social media is hence a fairly common phenomenon. The following motivations play a role, which were either mentioned in the survey or derived from the texts accompanying the photographs.

Variety

One quite obvious motivation for discontinuous posting is the variety of images, which can be achieved more easily by discontinuity. Variety seems to be a value in itself [15]. In the survey, almost all of the account holders related to the desire for a varied personal timeline, even citing the latin proverb: “Variatio delectat” – “Variety pleases”. But whom does it please? In the first place, the depiction of variety seems to be aimed at the audience: in order to achieve and maintain a positive social identity, it seems useful to communicate a varied life so as not to appear boring.

When posting content on social media, the focus on the recipient often comes into play: the “social” is part of it and this “social” is directed not only to one’s family members and best friends, but to a wider public. It seems that image-based platforms such as Instagram “have the potential to ameliorate loneliness due to the enhanced intimacy they offer” [16], thus to satisfy social needs on both sides – as long as they are not too boring. Further, seeking attention and affection are especially important aspects to share photographs on social media [8] – and both seems to be easier with a diverse portfolio.

Some photography on social media was labelled as “competitive photography”, a term, introduced by Alise Tifental [17]. Whereas Tifental defines this term in connection to the mastery of photographic technique, aesthetics, and creativity, in this case, the competition (also) refers to what is shown and whether it is approved by the audience. In another publication, Tifental and Manovich also write about “likable content”: “fellow photographers seem to approve of pictorial qualities, and not to be concerned about aiming a critical or political statement” [18]. This can also be confirmed for the observed accounts: the content is largely “likable”, thus – at least in the target group – not controversial, as comments and likes show.

In addition to the aspect that people want to be noticed and liked, there is also the desire for positive distinction, to gain and keep a positive social identity. Even though the profiles we

followed were at the current moment not intended to generate (much) money, some techniques that the account holders used resemble the practices of “micro-celebrity” and personal branding, thus strategic self-commodification [19]. Communicating frequent and varied (and thus discontinuous) activities can be seen in this light. What makes diversity particularly interesting here is that it is often linked to other resources, such as financial ones: showing frequent holidays, trips, makeovers, purchases etc. suggests that the person has a lot of money at her disposal. But other, positively connoted aspects also play a role with regard to the variety shown in the profile, for example that the person is very creative, open-minded, curious and interested in many different ways.

It seems obvious that social desirability plays a role and influences the postings, yet, it is also not surprising that although many account holders stated, that they want to “offer their followers variety”, none of them argued that they primarily wanted to present themselves in a particularly positive way. Consciously staging the own life and trying to influence the opinion of others could be perceived as inauthentic or even dishonest. This reminds on an aspect mentioned by Kristen Lauer in her analysis of coolness: to be perceived as cool, people often show “a lack of investment into coolness that did require effort embodied by the cool individual” [20], she calls it “apathy to cool.” This can be mirrored in comparably unattractive pictures people might post occasionally and be well aware of doing so as shown in the hashtags or descriptions: whoever does not care too much to be cool is cool. Paradox as it may sound it is pleasing if someone does not want to please – at least if she does not desperately want to please.

As shown, variety can be advantageous. However, it could also be thought of as reasonable that a profile should not be too varied: People have become followers because they seek certain information, inputs, styles, looks, emotions etc. A profile that offers too much variety could therefore also be counterproductive in terms of followers – it would be a profile that loses its profile.

Regularity

A certain kind of continuity, namely regularity, also plays a role, as several account holders explained. It was reported to be necessary to continuously publish postings in one's own account: “I post older pictures when I can't create new input for a while, for example when I'm sick, don't feel like it, or the weather is too bad to take pictures outside”. The motivation to post on a regular basis may be mainly to keep the followers in line. In this sense, there is a special compulsion behind the discontinuity: one “must” post, even if there is nothing to show at the moment, and chooses older photos out of necessity. This again is based on the fact that “people engage in social relationships with other people with expectations of receiving social rewards from the interaction” [10]. Such a positive reward consists in a mutual feeling of being connected, which needs regularity.

The tendency to post older photos in order to maintain regularity is more likely to be found in the profiles with a high

number of followers. Apparently many followers increase the pressure. But then some fans also follow the development with special care and build a para-social relationship with the account holder. This is shown by comments such as “Love watching you grow” or “It's great to see your development” – comments that make it more difficult to pretend actuality.

Partial identities

As mentioned above, the accounts we looked at mainly showed photographs of the account holders themselves. “When you take your own picture, you are attempting to extract and depict who you are. You might do this for two basic reasons. Firstly to explore and better understand yourself and secondly to express yourself to others” [21]. This kind of self-portraiture is closely related to identity, but the photographic process is not over when pressing the button but continues with the selection, the editing, and eventually the publishing of the photographs. Therefore, it is conceivable that the individual who posts discontinuous self-portraits regards them as an expression of the simultaneity of different partial identities: the synchronous aspect of identity treats different identities that exist at the same time [22] and it is expressed by the order of the photographs, - it stands for the way the person handles her identity(s). This fits in with Wilfried Ferchhoff's observation of “tendencially fragile or precarious (post) modern patchwork identity” [23], an identity that needs identity work. Texts accompanying the photographs like “my other self” or “the Hippie side of me” illustrate this phenomenon.

The account as diary

“The account as a diary” does not centre the recipient as much as the above mentioned motivations. Just like a personal diary, the personal timeline is also directed at the account holder herself as a kind of outsourced memory. One account holder reported: “I'm not only interested in what others see and think of me – my chronicle also offers me an overview of my own life.” Indeed, it is conceivable that one's own chronicle, which is compiled with much more care than the photos in the folders on the own computer, has parallels to the good old photo album. Consequently, one might think that self-deception plays a role here, since it is not the actual life that is shown, but a carefully composed overview of equally carefully selected, mostly edited pictures that are not only placed in certain contexts by their accompanying textual elements, but also put in a certain order that may follow thematic clusters or spontaneous inspiration rather than the actual order.

However, this is not new to social, or more general, digital media: private photo albums have also never been just recording life as it is. Jorgen Christensen et al. state that “the selection of photographs structures the memory of personal lives, and snapshots construe history and reality. This construction of personal history is characterized by exclusion. Only a few, if at all any snapshots depict the workplace and colleagues. It is a history of life as leisure” [24]. Private photo albums focus on the moments to remember just as Instagram

accounts do. Further, they reorder, e.g. cluster photographs just like the chronicles on Instagram.

Yet, the question arises why people show their photo album or photographic diary in public. This may be due to a certain convenience of not wanting to keep several diaries, but identification with the front-stage persona may also help to perceive oneself more positively. Similar effects, which are based on the connection between actions and emotions towards them, has been proven many times: „Bodily states in the self produce affective states” [25]. MRI scans can also be used to demonstrate to actors that emotions that are played and that were not found in the person himself in the sense of methods acting activate the same areas as real emotions [26]. Similarly, it is conceivable that the publicly communicated picture of a varied, multifaceted life also rubs off on one's own perception.

Connecting to the own past

“Sometimes I need to connect with my past and I can do it by posting older photographs” - about half of the respondents replied that they want to remember their past with older pictures. The temporal component matters in the construction of one's own identity, because identity also means understanding oneself as a coherent being, which changes over time, but also identifies with what it used to be. Besides the already mentioned synchronous identity, temporal aspect of identity [22], the “narrative identity construction” [27] plays an important role.

However, when looking at the connection of photographs to memory, the media philosopher Siegfried Kracauer understood these two as opposed to each other: photography takes a specific moment from the flow of time and freezes it whereas memory might be more fragmentary and less exact, but is much stronger related to meaning. Therefore, photography cannot really provide adequate insights into the past [28]. Kracauer's criticism is reminiscent of Socrates' critique of writing – but still, just like writing, people use photography as a means of memory: “There are no better souvenirs than photographs, no more successful remembrance than the self-made recordings of individual memories of the individual moments of each individual life” [29]. People use photographs for memory, even if they might not be particularly adequate. These photographs enable to pause for a moment, to appreciate the past, they offer moments of isolation and static compared to the experience of eternal change.

The fact that identity work and thus memory work is important for those concerned is also shown by the changes that people make. This becomes particularly clear when looking at body modifications. Tattoos e.g. are chosen by many of the profiles as one of their central themes and can be interpreted as “a memory inscribed on the skin” [30]. Some account holders also provide extensive explanations about their tattoos, whereas others do not mention permanent or semi-permanent changes, eventually because they break the chronology more often, because they do not want to be criticized for something so close to their identity, or because

they consider the body modifications as part of their identity, which do not require any explanation.

In addition, there is one more way to connect to the past: old pictures sometimes also serve as a comparison to the current situation, and in this case it is mostly about showing the greatest possible difference. Often, this serves to illustrate a positive, thus socially desirable development that is explained in the accompanying text.

The stream of consciousness

Another argumentation tells that the pictures do not follow the chronological sequence but the individual thoughts – “I post what I think about, what goes through my mind” – similar answers were given by nearly a third of the account holders asked for their motivation for discontinuous postings, and texts like “I just thought about...” frequently accompany the photographs posted. “The stream of consciousness – that flow of perceptions, purposeful thoughts, fragmentary images, distant recollections, bodily sensations, emotions, plans, wishes, and impossible fantasies – is our experience of life” [31] and as such, there is an inner coherence in the “stream”, yet it does not have to stick to the “outer” temporality. As it seems, account holders, who tend to post according to their stream of consciousness, want to share their feelings and thoughts. Therefore, photos are often shown with emotional texts, poems, proverbs, etc.

Discontinuity, Society, and the Individual

Now that strategies and motivations for discontinuity have been identified, it is questionable whether and what effects discontinuity could have on the individual and on society as a whole. Based on media materialism, one could assume that new media will favour new media habits that create new social constellations. Communication technology “is an extension of thought, of consciousness, of man’s unique perceptual capacities” [32]. With this basic idea, Harold Innis noticed already in the early 1950s that new communication technologies can alter the structure of thoughts [33] and Marshall McLuhan formulated his most famous thesis “the medium is the message” [34].

“The ‘message’ of any medium or technology is the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs” [34]. McLuhan gives the example that peoples or nations who see themselves as such have only existed since book printing was invented and the associated standardization and circulation of writing took place – and that was comparatively unimportant what was actually written in the books. Thus, media influence us not only through their content, but also through the “situation geography” that they create and that decisively changes our lives [35].

Especially Marshall McLuhan’s work was heavily criticized for its speculative nature, yet, a “new materialism” “is already present in the way technical media transmits and processes ‘culture’” [36] and no one would doubt that both photography

and social media are powerful and are able to create certain social constellation. Photography e.g. visualizes social norms by conveying what is “normal”, what is to be regarded as “beautiful” or “ugly”, what is worth a picture and what is not [37], photography creates images in our minds of how to imagine certain creatures, objects, places, or concepts. Today more than ever, photographs are used for communication and help to connect with the world.

The power of social media has also been frequently shown, be it with regard to the processing of information [38], to politics, or fashion [39]. Social media apparently favour or generate certain dynamics, modes of communication and views of the world.

However, while Marshall McLuhan predicted that the internet would create networked, circular thinking in the “global village”, this is not so clear for social media like Facebook and Instagram: Like the old key medium script, the framework that social network services offer for the personal account (unlike the news feed) is more likely to suggest a chronology than any other logic that breaks the linearity. In addition, “McLuhan severely overestimates the inflexibility of media of communication. While any given medium confronts an artist with certain inherent constraints, media still allow wide latitude for innovation and artistic manipulation” [32]. Instagram might provide a framework for a chronological personal timeline, yet, once again it becomes clear that people actively use media and shape them for their own purposes. Incidentally, Facebook has already shown a reaction (or action) here: reminders are regularly displayed and suggested as repostings.

The discontinuity could imply the self-empowerment of the individual: the people concerned decide for themselves whether and to what extent their account should follow a chronicle. In fact, they can overcome the constraints of their own biology and get one step closer to the idea of disembodiment or immateriality in cyberspace [40] despite the strong body-related nature of the photographs, they can rewrite their own stories. At least in their self-representation or their personal chronicle people succeed in overcoming the temporal and sometimes at the same time the spatial dimension. The celebration of social media as liberation, however, probably does not fully correspond to the facts. Many of the surveyed account holders emphasize that they want to offer diverse and regular postings to the recipients, in other words, that their Instagram use depends heavily on their own assessment of the target group and not just on their own preferences – even though both can influence each other.

The question of whether discontinuity on social media can also trigger new trends within society appears even more complex and answers inevitably remain speculative. As one of the motivations for the postings is to stay in touch with the own past, it is assumable that both for producers and recipients the own past can become more relevant for the present respectively for the understanding of the present. This fits in with the observation that identity work is becoming increasingly important nowadays [41]. Likewise, discontinuous postings can also reflect the general recognition of diversity: a

person not only goes through different stages, but is also in different stages at the same time. So, there is simultaneity that recognizes the fragmentation of identity. This tendency can also be reinforced by society. It already exists with numerous people who combine several identities, for example through belonging to various scenes or through hobby modelling, an increasingly popular activity that allows to act out partial identities [42].

Further – and even more speculative – it could mean that people increasingly prioritise feelings and freely floating thoughts over logic and rationality. The method of “free association” developed by Sigmund Freud comes to mind, which inspired romantic novels [43] such as Arthur Schnitzler’s “Leutnant Gustel” (1900) or James Joyce’s “Ulysses” (1922) at a time when the art world in particular saw a turn away from the clarity of classicism and a shift towards the emotional, irrational, and mystical. Similarly, the break with chronology in favour of the stream of consciousness and the acceptance of simultaneities that should actually produce cognitive dissonance can be interpreted as a sign for a new arising romanticism: “In fact, the similarity between postmodernism and romanticism are surprising” [44]. One’s own past can also be associated with feelings of nostalgia and longing, which in turn can be linked to neo-romanticism. Due to the ubiquity of Instagram, discontinuous postings may not only be an expression of neo-romanticism, but also reinforce it.

Conclusion

Whether it is a cause or an effect – in any case we are dealing with an appropriation of media technology that can be an expression of the liberation from simple linear thinking towards more individual freedom and towards the integration of one’s own history, but at the same time can also stand of lack of freedom that finds its expression in the submission to the requirements of a medium that demands variety and regularity. Even if the latter is more likely the case “yesterday’s gone” no longer applies: yesterday is very present.

References

- Kietzmann JH, Hermkens K, McCarthy IP, Silvestre BS (2011) Social media? Get serious! Understanding the functional building blocks of social media. *Business Horizons* 54: 241-251.
- Zhao S, Grasmuck S, Martin J (2008) Identity construction on Facebook: Digital empowerment in anchored relationships. *Computers in Human Behavior* 24: 1816-1836.
- Thomas TC, Price LL, Schau HJ (2013) When differences unite: Resource dependence in heterogeneous consumption communities. *Journal of Consumer Research* 39: 1010-1033.
- Erickson B (2003) Social Networks: The Value of Variety. *Contexts* 2: 25-31.
- Spottswood EL, Handock JT (2017) Should I Share That? Prompting Social Norms That Influence Privacy Behaviors on a Social Networking Site. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 22: 55-70.
- Limayem M, Cheung CM (2011) Predicting the continued use of internet-based learning technologies: the role of habit. *Behav. Info. Technol.* 30: 91-99.
- Kaye BK, Johnson TJ (2002) Online and in the know: uses and gratifications of the web for political information. *J. Broadcast. Electron. Media* 46: 54-71.
- Malik A, Dhir A, Nieminen M (2016) Uses and Gratifications of digital photo sharing on Facebook. *Telematics and Informatics* 33: 129-138.
- Sheth JN, Newman BI, Gross BL (1991) Why we buy what we buy: a theory of consumption values. *Journal of Business Research* 22: 159-170.
- Hallikainen P (2015) Why People Use Social Media Platforms: Exploring the Motivations and Consequences of Use. In: Mola L, Pennarola F, Za S (eds.) *From Information to Smart Society. Lecture Notes in Information Systems and Organisations*, 5. Wiesbaden: Springer, Pp: 9-17.
- Smith A, Anderson M (2018) *Social Media Use in 2018*. Pew Research Center. Internet & Technology.
- Miller D, Sinanan J (2017) *Visualising Facebook. A Comparative Perspective*. London: UCL Press.
- Miller C (2014) The Promise of social media. *Demos Quarterly* 1: 1-8.
- Darwin H (2017) Doing Gender beyond the Binary: A Virtual Ethnography. *Symbolic Interaction* 40: 317-334.
- Xuenan J (2015) Consumers’ Variety Seeking: From an Information Perspective. *International Business Research* 8: 42-53.
- Pittman M, Reich B (2016) Social Media and Loneliness: Why an Instagram picture may be worth more than a thousand Twitter words. *Computers in Human Behavior*. 62: 155-167.
- Tifentale A (2016) *Defining Competitive Photography*.
- Tifentale A, Manovich L (2018) Competitive Photography and the Presentation of the Self. In: Eckel J, Ruchatz J, Wirth S (eds.) *Exploring the Selfie: Historical, Analytical, and Theoretical Approaches to Digital Self-Photography*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp: 167-187.
- Marwick AE, Boyd D (2010) I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience. *New Media & Society* 13: 114-133.
- Lauer K (2018) The Experience of “Cool”: A Qualitative Exploration. *Dissertations & Theses*. 428. AURA-Antioch University Repository and Archive.
- Ita JO, Iwok U (2018) Selfies, Communications, and Female Students Self-Presentation in Social Network Sites. *New Media and Mass Communication* 70: 21-28.
- Henning T (2012) Personale Identität und personale Identitäten – Ein Problemfeld der Philosophie. In: Petzold H (ed) *Identität Ein Kernthema moderner Psychotherapie – Interdisziplinäre Perspektiven*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, pp: 19-38.
- Ferchhoff W (2011) *Jugend und Jugendkulturen im 21. Jahrhundert. Lebensformen und Lebensstile*. Wiesbaden: Springer.
- Christensen JR, Hansen JC, Larsen FH, Nielsen JS (2015) From Snapshot to Snapchat: Panopticon or Synopticon? *Academic Quarter* 11: 69-84.

25. Barsalou LW, Niedenthal PM, Barbey AK, Ruppert JA (2003) Social Embodiment. In: Ross BH (ed) *The Psychology of Learning and Motivation. Advances in Research and Theory*. Amsterdam: Academic Press, pp: 43-92.
26. Hänßler B (2018) *Die Seele auf der Bühne*. Psychologie Heute
27. Schaupp U (2012) Soziale Identität und schulische Transition. Gruppengefühl und Zugehörigkeit beim Übergang von der Primar- in die Sekundarschule. Wiesbaden: Springer
28. Kracauer S (1977) *Das Ornament der Masse*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
29. Haverkamp A (1993) Das Bildgedächtnis der Photographie: Roland Barthes und Augustinus. In: Haverkamp A, Lachmann R (eds.) *Memoria. Vergessen und Erinnern*. München: Fink, pp: 47-66.
30. Hirsch M (2012) *The Generation of postmemory: writing and visual culture after the Holocaust*. New York: Columbia University Press.
31. Pope KS, Singer JL (1978) Introduction. *The Flow of Human Experience*. In: Pooe KS, Singer JL (eds.) *The Stream of Consciousness. Scientific Investigations into the Flow of Consciousness*. New York and London: Plenum Press, pp: 1-9.
32. Carey JW (1967) Harold Adam Innis and Marshall McLuhan. *The Antioch Review* 27: 5-39.
33. Innis HA (1951) *The Bias of Communication*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
34. McLuhan M (1964) *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
35. Meyrowitz J (1990) *Überall und nirgends dabei. Die Fernsehgesellschaft*. 2 Bände Weinheim.
36. Parikka J (2012) Forum: New Materialism. *New Materialism as Media Theory: Medianatures and Dirty Matter. Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 9: 95-100.
37. Jäger J (2009) *Fotografie und Geschichte*. Frankfurt: Campus Verlag.
38. Roese V (2018) You won't believe how co-dependent they are: Or: Media hype and the interaction of news media, social media, and the user. In: Vasterman P (ed) *From Media Hype to Twitter Storm*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, pp: 313-332.
39. Colliander J, Dahlén M (2011) Following the Fashionable Friend: The Power of Social Media. *Journal of Advertising Research* 51: 313-320.
40. Lackner T (2014) *Computerspiel und Lebenswelt: Kulturanthropologische Perspektiven*. Bielefeld: Transcript.
41. Abels H (2017) *Identität. Über die Entstehung des Gedankens, dass der Mensch ein Individuum ist, den nicht leicht zu verwirklichenden Anspruch auf Individualität und Kompetenzen, Identität in einer riskanten Modernen zu finden und zu wahren*. Wiesbaden: Springer.
42. Jerrentrup MT (2019) Identity without Similarity: The Relation between the Individual and her Picture. *Imaginations: Journal of Cross-Cultural Image Studies* 10: 2.
43. Saul N (2009) *The Cambridge Companion to German Romanticism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
44. Valenzuela García H (2002) Neoromanticismo postmoderno o 'Adiós a la Razón'. *Los frutos amargos del relativismo a ultranza. Gazeta de Antropología* 18.