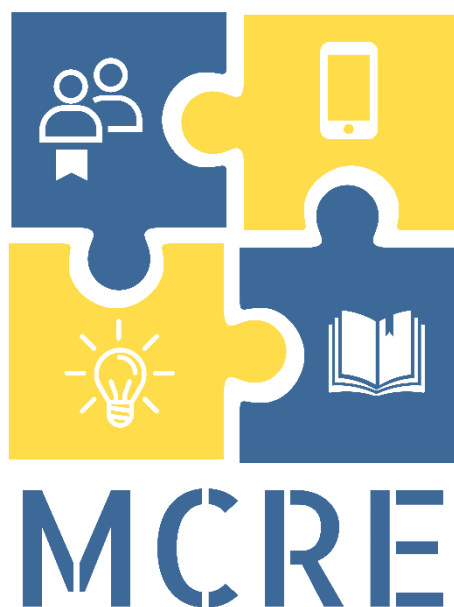




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MODULE 5: Using the media effectively

Developed by LABC

within the project

MCRE - Media literacy, critical viewing and CREative vision as effective learning
approach for people with fewer opportunities

THE PARTNERSHIP:





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1. AIM AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1.1. AIM OF THE MODULE

Using the media effectively is an important point in supporting adults in analysing information so that they can be more resistant to fake news and misinformation and equipping them with tools (mobile application) to analyse fake news.

Using the media effectively means being able both to analyse the information they receive and to be an active and included part of the communication process, helping to limit vulnerability but also counteracting an overly cautious attitude of distance that leads to self-exclusion.

The aim of this Module is therefore to introduce the learner to the basic concepts of communication and critical thinking, so that, with the help of the media, the learner, by understanding them, will be able to put them into practice and thus increase their media literacy and critical outlook.

1.2. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of this Module, the learner will master:

- ✓ Key concepts on the effective use of communication and media
- ✓ Theoretical and practical models on how to approach the media effectively
- ✓ Tools for recognising an effective information source

2. LEARNING CONTENT

Over the last twenty years, the Internet and especially the advent of social networks have been a real revolution in human sociality. The changes that this revolution has brought are of great impact and pervasive in every area of a person's life. If we reflect, most of the services that used to require direct contact are now effectively conveyed through the Internet.

This phenomenon is not just about news, it includes services and legal accreditations.

Is society as a whole able to adapt to all these changes?

Unfortunately, the Internet and digital communications, which in their early days seemed to promise a real democratisation of communication because they could give voice to anyone, have created profound differences depending on the age, schooling and level of digital literacy of each individual. Since education itself, with its potential to make people grow, now takes place through digital media, the gap runs the risk of not



being bridged, contributing to a clear division between those who are able to communicate digitally and those who are not.

In order to bridge this gap and accompany people with fewer opportunities to acquire the basic skills needed to use media (traditional and new), it is essential to start from a basic skill of the human race, the ability to communicate using a codified and complex language.

This action will also be useful in countering that counter-culture of alienation and self-exclusion to which these people increasingly resort and which is at the behavioural level a barrier on the road to full inclusion.

If in today's world communication, even official communication, has crossed the boundaries of the written language and uses sounds and images, it is appropriate to know the elementary rules of syntax.



2.1. THE COMMUNICATION OUTLINE APPLIED TO DIGITAL COMMUNICATION

2.1.1. Communication theory

The classic communication scheme is applicable to social and digital communication. The following table shows an element-by-element comparison that highlights similarities and differences.

ELEMENT	MEANING	COMMUNICATION	SOCIAL AND DIGITAL COMMUNICATION
EMITTER	(who communicates)	Person, institution, organisation	
RECEIVER	(who receives)	Public known, defined	Unknown audience, unlimited Information, ideas, opinions
MESSAGE	(what I communicate)	Information, ideas, concepts, opinions	



ELEMENT	MEANING	COMMUNICATION	SOCIAL AND DIGITAL COMMUNICATION
CONTEXT	(situation in which communication takes place)	Under control	Out of control
CHANNEL	(how the transmission of the message takes place)	Defined one (radio, TV, newspapers, books)	Many undefined because the channels are communicating vessels that act as a sounding board for each other.
REFERENT	(theme of the message, topic)	Defined sources, defined level of knowledge, authoritativeness of the message	Endless resources, of all quality levels, everyone can express their opinion
CODE	(language)	Defined, identifiable, regulated by rules and customs	Indefinite, multimedia, depending on the channel, the receiver, and the purpose

It becomes clear that when there is a substantial difference between the before and after digitization of communication, the indefiniteness and complexity increase, and along with these comes the risks that have to be interpreted both in the position of the EMITTER (risk of not being able to transfer the message properly - what? to whom? When? Where? Why?) and in that of the RECEIVER (risk of not being able to understand the message in a suitable way - what? Is it for me? When? Where? For what reason?).

This complexity has an even more significant impact when one considers that social media have taken the meaning of communication as conversation to the highest level.

From this point of view, it is evident how mistrust and consequent rejection is generated towards social media where the passage of communication is fast (frenetic), unsafe and undefined, triggering the fear of not being understood, misunderstood and considered or of being misunderstood, misunderstood and deceived.

The way to inclusion is not as compatible with keeping a safe distance as the ability to understand and master the mechanisms of communication in order to participate consciously.

To communicate using social media today is not simply to convey a message, it is to initiate a conversation in which feedback is potentially as valuable as the communication



from which it originated. In practice, the communicator (EMITTER) expects likes, comments, and shares to which he/she may eventually respond.

2.2. SOCIAL MEDIA AND CONVERSATIONAL THEORY

In communication that conforms to the conversational model, it is useful to consider the Four Conversational Maxims that Herbert Paul Grice (1913 - 1988) identified as cardinal rules for effective communication. Although these maxims were developed by Grice, a philosopher and linguist, to regulate verbal exchanges in the presence, being inspired by a principle of cooperation between individuals, they can be successfully applied to a complex communication universe such as that of digital communication.

In this key, they can be used in training to provide an effective interpretative structure.

Grice is known for his 'Theory of Conversational Implications' and the formulation of the 'Co-operation Principle'. According to Grice's theory, each interlocutor in order to be effective in conversation must contribute to the communicative exchange by conforming to four maxims

- ✓ **Maximum of quantity:** offer a contribution that satisfies the request or need for information in a manner appropriate to the purposes of the discourse; do not provide more information than necessary;
- ✓ **Maximum of quality:** offer a true contribution; do not say things you believe to be false and for which you do not have adequate evidence;
- ✓ **Maximum of relation:** be relevant;
- ✓ **Maximum of manner:** be clear, avoid ambiguity and obscurity of expression, be concise and orderly.

For Grice, a conversation begins where there is cooperation between the subjects.

2.3. HOW CAN WE USE THE FOUR MAXIMS OF CONVERSATION IN EDUCATION?

After briefly explaining how and why social communication is similar to a conversation and what the four conversational maxims are, the lecturer asks the participants to work in small groups (of 4 or 5 individuals) and assigns each group the task of initiating a communication on a topic they are familiar with (this can be the outcome of a sports competition, the release of a film, the organisation of a trip). The initiation of the communication must conform to Grice's 4 maxims.

Back in plenary, each group takes it in turn to present its communication (verbally or in writing on a poster of their choice) and the other groups contribute to the exchange by starting a conversation. Each member of the class can report a violation if they see it. At the end of the exchange, the facilitator invites participants to a reflection session on the exchange that has taken place.

The purpose of this activity is to bring participants closer to an active, conscious and normed use of communication. The group dimension allows for a playful atmosphere that helps people learn together and from each other. It is essential that the facilitator promotes a collaborative and non-judgmental climate.



2.4. MEDIA EDUCATION AND SOCIAL COMMUNICATION EDUCATION

When we talk about media education we mean

- ✓ media education (understood as useful tools in teaching processes and as part of the experience pupils have with the media)
- ✓ media education (i.e. the critical understanding of texts and the media system to enable students to use them critically and consciously).

These two ways of understanding media education both contribute to the acquisition of basic digital skills through an indirect and direct process of media communication, especially digital communication.

Whether one speaks of media education or media education, learning is aimed at the combined and organic acquisition of the practices of effective communication and critical thinking.

The skills of effective communication and critical thinking are crucial for the creation of credible and responsible news if we are in the position of the ISSUER and identification and verification if we are in the position of the RECEIVER.

The credibility of a news story (in the form of a post, article, information) is based on checking three fundamental aspects

- the content
- The form
- The credits

2.5. THE RULES OF COMMUNICATION: LASSWELL MODEL

In order to use the media effectively, both in the issuing and receiving phases of the news, it is necessary to refer to another 'classic' model of communication: the 5 W model.

This model was developed by Lasswell, a political scientist belonging to the Chicago School, and presents a linear structure that is able to interpret the communication process.

Although the model was elaborated by Harold D. Lasswell in 1948, at a time when no one could even imagine the digital revolution of communication and the impact of social media, it is effective, indeed it highlights all its value precisely in the entropic environment that communication expresses nowadays.

"A convenient way to describe an act of communication is to answer the following questions: Who Says What in Which Channel To Whom With What Effect?"

With this short and effective definition, Lasswell identifies an all-encompassing model that is valid in all areas of communication, including future ones.

This paradigm is based on the idea that communication (and the propagation of news) performs three social functions: surveillance, correlation and transmission. The media in Lasswell's conception were intended to have an impact on people's ideas and beliefs, which is an extremely topical issue considering the current pervasiveness of information.



Creating effective communication and consequently receiving effective communication means answering the questions:

- who?
- says what?
- by what means?
- to whom?
- with what effects?

2.6. REFLECTIONS ON HAROLD LASSWELL'S MODEL WITH REGARD TO SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

Lasswell's model focuses on who activates the communication process (sender) and produces the message. Since the social communication model, as described above, coincides in many respects with the conversation, it is evident that all parties included in the communication process are required to respond to the 5Ws if effective communication is to be pursued.

Responding to the 5 Ws even when commenting on news is a valid antidote to today's social communication frenzy.

Here is the application of Lasswell's model to a social communication of the dissemination type.

If I issue the message:

- ✓ *Who?* In what capacity do I communicate this news? "I am an expert on the subject"
- ✓ *says what?* What is the content and what is important?
- ✓ *in which medium?* Which medium do I choose post/article/comment/instant message and on which platform do I choose to communicate
- ✓ *to whom?* Who are the recipients of my communication? Customers? Experts? Students?
- ✓ *with what effects?* Do I want to teach? Do I want to show my expertise? Do I want to open discussion channels? Do I want to sell a product or service?

If I get the message:

- ✓ *who?* Who writes? What are his competences?
- ✓ *says what?* What is the content and what is important?
- ✓ *in which medium?* Which medium did he/she choose post/article/comment/instant message and on which platform
- ✓ *to whom?* Who is it addressed to? Is this a message for me?
- ✓ *with what effects?* What do you wish to achieve?



WHO	COMMUNICATOR/EMITTER	SENDER INVESTIGATION
say what	MESSAGE	Content investigation
in which channel	CHANNEL	Media Enquiries
to whom	TARGET/RECEIVER	Receiver investigation
with what effect	IMPACT	Effect studies

If Lasswell's original model presents communication as a one-way street, which does not consider the receiver's feedback, in the application of the model to social communication, which now influences all our interactions, we cannot help but consider feedback as an integral element of communication itself, capable of orienting it and defining its developments.

The mostly asynchronous mode of these exchanges directs us towards a model that multiplies the issuers. The relevance and understanding of one's position in relation to the message is fundamental in the construction of effective communication.

2.7. HOW CAN WE USE THE 5W THEORY IN TEACHING?

The proposal is for participants to experiment with the 5W theory. The teacher asks participants to work in small groups (of 4 or 5 individuals) and assigns each group the task of 'realising' a social communication.

The topic is common to all groups: talking about the training they are engaged in. This is the only element common to all as each small group will have a sheet containing this information:

- ✓ Who? That is, who is the author of the news
- ✓ To whom? I.e. to whom the news is addressed
- ✓ What? What is the message/information
- ✓ To achieve what effect? A choice of possible e.g. witnessing / convincing / telling / sharing emotions
- ✓ With which channels? Which social channel among Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Email, WhatsApp and which language (writing, video, audio, etc.)
- ✓ A surprise element out of context that has to be included in the message.

The last element functions as a constraint and serves to activate the creative and problem-solving process by preventing participants from leaning too much on preconceived conventions.

The groups have 15 minutes to realise their social communication. When they have finished, in plenary each group illustrates its work and peers outside the group are invited to identify the 5 Ws of the message.



This phase in plenary is usually a lot of fun, full of observations and jokes. This is the moment when the lecturer can contribute some technical and management information.

2.8. CRITICAL THINKING AND SOCIAL MEDIA

If we stop to observe our own behaviour or that of the people we most frequent in our daily lives, whether family members or colleagues, we cannot fail to notice the space that social media occupy in our lives. The continuous and massive access to information through devices no longer has time or contextual limits: we are constantly exposed to data and information that, in some way, condition our state of mind and contribute to defining our thinking about what is happening in the world, or much more simply, beside us.

Several studies confirm that continued use of the Internet diminishes our critical thinking. Apparently, some aspects of the internet do not help to develop this ability, on the contrary, they weaken it. This is not a feared hypothesis, but a conclusion that emerges from analysis. The network operates within logics that, naturally, have consequences.

How does this happen? Many functions, services or spaces on the web, from search engines to social networks, work with algorithms. The principle would be to 'match' the user's interests and preferences. Over time, however, they end up limiting the surfers' experiences on the web.

Let us go into more detail. There has already been much discussion in the past about the phenomenon known as agenda setting, i.e. the power of the media to filter and manipulate information by focusing users' attention only on predetermined topics, thus orienting collective opinion. A similar but more refined process takes place on social networks, channels on which millions of different kinds of content are published and shared every day: an algorithm based on meaningful interaction is used to filter the news, which shows the user only the content with which they have interacted and towards which they have shown interest.

This mode, apparently effective and functional, creates an increasingly muffled and restricted virtual comfort zone. The so-called 'filter bubble' is thus created: users display news on their feed, algorithms propose similar content and individuals find themselves in a bubble in which they only have access to information that only confirms their own beliefs.

At first we set our own 'agenda' of interest, but soon our decision-making ability passes to the algorithm that locks us into this bubble to make the experience on social as gratifying and long-lasting as possible.

This process gives impetus to a further phenomenon: the echo chamber. The echo chamber refers to a situation in which a person receives a series of information or ideas on the internet that reinforce their point of view, without having access to other resources that could provide a different perspective and thus a more objective view of the situation.



The consequences are exponential: first of all, a progressive isolation due to the rigidity and limitation of the topics to which one exposes oneself, it is as if our interests are hypodermically inoculated, annihilating any stimulus towards curiosity, openness to new topics, and proactive search for information.

Social media become mass distraction tools that omit important information from our view.

The result is the weakening of critical thinking.

There are three main ways in which the Internet acts in this regard.

1. Information found on the internet confirms our opinions

When we search for a word on the internet, the search engine activates a series of parameters based on the information it has previously gathered about us. In this way, the first sites to appear in the list are those we visit most often or that contain information we usually consult. Needless to say, a significant amount of material is left out of the search.

Something similar happens in social networks. As soon as we log in, we see in the foreground the posts of people with whom we habitually interact and who, in principle, think in a similar way to us. Without realising it, our circle has already shrunk considerably.

Algorithms imperceptibly catapult us into an ideological world that confirms our opinions. They avoid putting us in touch with information and ideas that conflict with our own, giving us a limited idea of the reality around us. We are convinced that we know reality without realising that we are being encouraged to see only a slice of it. This is the first reason why the Internet reduces our critical thinking.

2. The Internet encourages narcissism and diminishes critical capacity

Social networks have created a new kind of addiction, that of **'I like'**. We don't do it consciously, but every time we post, in one way or another we expect the reactions of our friends, the approval of what we have posted. If no one does, we get frustrated and even doubt the validity of our thoughts.

Science says that **'I like'** activate the secretion of dopamine and act as reward mechanisms. They make one feel good because they imply acceptance by the community. This can become a problem when this addiction shapes our ideas or words, without us realising it.

Another way in which the Internet diminishes our critical thinking is precisely this: by converting our ego into a product of social consumption and the constant search for approval. Disagreement can mean leaving a group, having to face rejection or criticism. Fear of consequences can powerfully condition our thinking.



3. Encourages irrelevant social relationships

There are different ways to interact online: social networks, but also forums, chats, etc. The web gives us the false feeling of not being alone, in a conversation that seems to have neither head nor tail. This endless dialogue revolves around topics that become 'common'. Whether we like them or not, these topics must be talked about.

Gradually, the Internet makes physical contact superfluous. Internet interactions always involve the same posture: sitting and in front of a screen. Both situations have an effect on the body and the brain.

Movement stimulates intelligence, physical contact increases the ability to feel empathy, exchange and affection. The Internet induces us to adapt, voluntarily and meekly, to new ways of relating to others, moving us away from direct experience of real life. The risk is that we begin to see the world through a narrow and limited frame: our computer screen.

We are becoming used to an unprecedented intellectual laziness: we are satisfied with information provided to us without checking the source, without seeking a critical voice, outside the chorus. We practise thinking that our opinion is true and irrefutable because it is reinforced and proven by a mass of news, thus losing the ability to question ourselves.

The solution, as always, is awareness and intentionality: the internet is a very powerful tool at the service of mankind, an enormous resource that cannot, however, be considered exhaustive. We need to be educated, oriented and prepared for the inexhaustible digital source flowing from our screens, only then will technology be an asset and not a threat.

2.9. HOW CAN WE PROMOTE THE DEVELOPMENT OF CRITICAL THINKING?

People who have not developed critical thinking generally content themselves with elementary explanations in line with their own cognitive biases and prejudices, preferring slogans to arguments and uncritical acceptance over in-depth investigation and verification of sources.

From the Facebook contact who shares fake news to the big manager who makes rash decisions without questioning the data he has at his disposal, individuals with insufficiently developed critical thinking risk seriously damaging themselves and others.

The above leads us to the concept of 'functional illiteracy', i.e. the inability to correctly interpret texts and messages demonstrated by schooled people who theoretically should be able to understand and verify the information presented to them.

An increasingly large segment of the schooled population avoids complexity, seeing it as a threat rather than a challenge, leading society towards a regression with worrying contours. The best way to counter this tendency is to adopt and develop critical thinking skills and apply them to the challenges of everyday and professional life.

To develop critical thinking, the key to the whole operation lies in the objectivity of the subject. Indeed, the critical thinker must be able to leave behind his or her own feelings,



prejudices and interests in order to pursue a view that is as objective and real as possible based on facts and context. Knowing how to challenge preconceptions and adopt new perspectives in the name of impartiality, in fact, is one of the basic requirements of those who are willing to put their critical thinking to the test.

3 points of view useful for developing critical thinking:

1. Recognise your biases... and put them aside!

Biases, also known as 'cognitive distortions', include generalisation, prejudice, polarisation (seeing things only as black/white, right/wrong) and so-called 'selective attention', that is the tendency to select only those parts of a discourse that support our beliefs and opinions. The first step in understanding how to develop critical thinking is to accept that we all have biases and to be able to put them calmly aside.

2. Exercise proactivity

Being proactive means playing an active role in our lives and being a driver for the changes we would like to see in the world. The alternative? Living as actors who react exclusively to what happens to them, limiting ourselves to adapting our behaviour always 'in response' and never 'in proposal'.

Why suffer change if we can be its author? Training proactivity means putting one's mind at the service of personal and collective progress, and it also helps us become more competitive in the labour market.

3. Expand your horizons

When faced with a difficult problem or choice, try to go beyond the conclusions your mind automatically generates. Think about what another person would do and what an outsider would think. Adopt their perspectives and you will realise that the same problem and choice can be approached in many different ways that you probably would not have thought of.

Always question everything and delve into news, opinions and comments to keep only the elements that correspond to reality with you.

In general, a person who trains his or her critical thinking is less susceptible to manipulation, makes more informed decisions and is able to solve problems and conflicts in a more effective and original way, because critical and creative thinking often work together. Let us apply the two approaches to the same well-known riddle: a man falls from a 40-storey building and survives - how is this possible?

Using critical thinking we can hunt for eventualities that might explain the strange event:

- ✓ the man could have fallen on a mattress placed there by firemen,
- ✓ the fall could have been mitigated by a series of obstacles that slowed it down.

Employing creative thinking, on the other hand, we can explore the matter by looking for possible logical flaws:



- ✓ the building is 40 storeys high, but nobody said that the man fell from the highest one;
- ✓ he was the actor in an action film who, fortunately for him, was wearing a parachute at the time.

Combining these two soft skills, can help to collect a much wider, more diverse and unusual range of solutions than those who only exploit uncritical, vertical thinking.

2.10. SYNTAX AND RULES FOR EFFECTIVE SOCIAL COMMUNICATION - SOCIAL MEDIA ARE NOT ALL THE SAME

The aim of this last section of the chapter "Using media effectively" is to enrich the knowledge of digital and social media channels as an integral part of the "context" of the modern communication process.

Since it will not be possible to survey all the existing platforms that continue to appear on the digital landscape, the handbook will refer to those that are best known and most relevant to the project's target audience, while still providing evidence of a method of approach that can be critically applied to other platforms.

The presentation of social and digital channels follows a recurring pattern, the structure of which we explain here:

- Brief history
- What kind of communication
- Some syntax rules
- Common scams and risks to watch out for

Let us start with the definition of social media:

The most widely accepted definition of social media is that given by Andreas Kaplan and Michael Haenlein in their article 'Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media' for whom social media is "a group of Internet-based applications that form the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and enable the creation and exchange of user-generated content".

The identifying characteristic is therefore the horizontality in the creation and dissemination of content as opposed to the verticality of traditional mass media.

All the subjects of the communication project are at the same level and this democratic nature changes the traditional roles of communication because each message is multidirectional, i.e. there is a shift to 'many-to-many' or 'peer-to-peer' transmission. The 'monologue' becomes a 'dialogue', a conversation, between users, media and companies, sender and receiver alternate in a continuous flow of roles, without predefined hierarchies.

Social media have become very popular because they allow people to use the Web to establish personal or business relationships. They are also referred to as user-generated content (UGC) or consumer-generated media (CGM).



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Social media have been growing in popularity for several decades now, and are now specialised by domains.



2.10.1. Facebook

Facebook was born in 2004 from the idea of some students at Harvard (USA) who wanted to create a 'social network' within the university. One of these students was Mark Zuckerberg, who was able to turn a small university application into the globally spread social network we know today.

A trace of its origin remains in its name, which refers to the school yearbook, of which it is the digital version: students living on campus could get to know each other from a personal file, full of pictures and indexed information.

Since its inception, Facebook has been at the centre of controversy and court cases over the use and obtaining of personal data. Nevertheless, its expansion has been unstoppable and since 2006 it has been open to anyone over 13 years of age.



2004, February

**2.797 billion
monthly
active users**



Developed by LABC from Creative Commons images

Facebook's functionality has grown year after year also through a clever policy of acquiring competing companies and integrating the most significant functionalities.

Zuckerberg, starting in 2012, acquired Instagram and WhatsApp. By now, since 2018, Facebook is the social network with the largest number of active users governed through a Facebook Algorithm that chooses the content to be shown to users by creating the so-called information bubble.

Facebook had to provide for anti-fake news measures that allow the possibility of the user to report fake news, and their deletion upon reaching an appropriate number of negative feedbacks.

In 2015, Facebook introduced emoticons to allow a more detailed emotional reaction to statuses and news items, in addition to the like.

What kind of communication

Although it is still the most popular social network with 2.797 billion monthly active users, it is not the most sought after by a young audience that seems to prefer services such as TikTok or Instagram. Presence in the social media is possible in two types:

- o Individual account
- o Page of an organisation, cause, project used for marketing and promotion and administered by one or more individual users with assigned roles

For individual accounts, the main function remains the sharing of experiences and emotions.



There is a code of ethics that is subscribed to when signing up and which provides for blocking the user in the event of violation. For example, in 2021 Donald Trump's account (not only on Facebook but also on other social channels) was blocked because it was considered that he had used the platform's potential to foment the violence that led to the attack on the US congress.

Very famous is the 'Cambridge Analytics' case revealed by an article of 17 March 2018 in the pages of The New York Times and The Guardian: through an apparently harmless app ('This is your digital life'), the platform allowed the improper acquisition of the personal information of around 87 million Facebook users and on the basis of this information, the results of the election campaigns of Donald Trump and Ted Cruz, but also the campaign in support of Brexit, were influenced.

Some syntax rules

The tone used is often confidential, texts can be enriched with smileys and emoji to emphasise and reinforce the message. It is possible to share activities, emotions, memories, and opinions. Anyone can write anything with no need to check the sources.

Common scams and risks to watch out for

Facebook is a huge virtual square, it is important to know that what we can see in the feed available to our user is the result of the algorithm. So, it is possible to get the impression that Facebook users have our ideas and interests. We have to be aware that we are inside an information bubble that should not exhaust our thirst for information.

In addition, there are many fake accounts on Facebook that could ask for our friendship, capture our trust and attempt to manipulate or cheat us. There are a few good rules we can follow before befriending a user who contacts us:

- 1) Grant friendship to users of people we know in real life
- 2) If we don't know the user who asks to join the group of our friends, we view the profile, if it has very few photographs, a few posts perhaps repeated and little news, it is probably a fake produced by an automatic programme
- 3) If someone asks for money for a cause using the instant messaging system, we do not send money, let alone give access to credit card numbers. Remember that there are other ways to fund good causes! If we are in doubt, we ask for official channels.



2.10.2. LinkedIn

If Facebook was born in a university environment, LinkedIn has since its inception in 2002 shown its vocation as a service dedicated to the sphere and the labour market.

Today, LinkedIn is a professional social media spread over more than 200 countries with 774 million users.

Its creator Reid Hoffman, a graduate in Cognitive Science (1990) with a major in Philosophy (1993), with a professional background in information technology, had already developed eWorld, an unsuccessful professional social network

for Apple Computer in 1994. After this first unsuccessful experience, he launched his first start-up SocialNet.com, a website capable of connecting people with similar interests, which was the true precursor of today's social networks. Unfortunately, the time was not yet ripe, and Hoffman changed sectors and contributed to the creation of PayPal, an online money transfer service, of which he first became COO (chief operating office) and then executive vice-president. In December 2002, after the acquisition of PayPal by Ebay, he and three former colleagues and a high school friend started the LinkedIn project.

The initial idea was to connect companies and candidates, but the social network evolved to become the world's leading professional network aimed at increasing productivity and success.

LinkedIn is a social platform dedicated to professionals to offer business networking opportunities to search and offer jobs online. The service is Worldwide and available in 24 languages.

Today, LinkedIn is a database of professional profiles, the first place where recruiters look for candidates and the social where you need to be if you are looking for a job.

The main functions are:

- ✓ publish CVs to find jobs
- ✓ share valuable content and projects
- ✓ find new clients or collaborators
- ✓ keeping informed

Today, LinkedIn has more than 16,000 employees, 33 offices in more than 30 cities and follows a diversified business model capable of adapting to different national contexts.



2002

**830 million
members
and over
58 million
registered
companies**



Developed by LABC from Creative Commons images



What kind of communication

LinkedIn is dedicated to news about professional life and companies. Personal or recreational topics are not shared.

LinkedIn is a serious, somewhat formal digital place, where controversy and unconstructive discussions should be avoided. On the other hand, it is a place full of information and references for those who want to expand their knowledge on a topic..

Some syntax rules

The tone is professional, it is best to avoid or at least limit emoticons. Personal opinions must be supported by sources. Videos are mostly institutional.

Common scams and risks to watch out for

Many LinkedIn users complain that they often get no feedback on their application for a position posted on LinkedIn. This occurrence can be blamed on the bad behaviour of companies that under-staff candidates who are not interesting to them. on other occasions, it is a matter of covert advertisements used by HR to do bench marketing on certain positions.

In addition to these which are bad habits, there are real scams such as a phishing campaign that in 2021 attacked LinkedIn by sending fake job offers hiding malware in the PC that allows remote control.

The fake job offers exactly matched the wording of the last job advertised on the profile.



2.10.3. Instagram

Instagram is one of the most popular social media, with more than one billion active users.

Instagram has had such widespread success that it has created a new professional figure, that of the influencer, i.e., the new owner of a profile with a large following (counted in followers) and for this reason able to influence opinions, habits and consumption within the community that follows him.

The first image shared for testing on Instagram is dated 16 July 2010 and is a photo depicting the dog of one of its

creators, Mike Krieger and Kevin Systrom. On 6 October 2010, the Instagram app was launched for the first time.

The original intention was to propose a social media with the function of a shared photo album.

Its evolution has been so significant that for many features it has served as an example for other social media: hashtags (2011), video sharing (2013), stories (2015-2016) and reels (2020) first appeared in Instagram and are now present in almost all social channels. This standardisation and transferability of functionality is also the result of the acquisition of Instagram by Facebook in 2013.

Instagram also developed a large set dedicated to communication, both in the sense of messaging and video calling.

Today, of Instagram's original vocation for photo collections, only the logo remains. By now, Instagram is a powerful commercial communication channel especially for fashion or image-related brands.

Every day, around 80 million photos are shared on IG and there are around 3.5 billion likes.

What kind of communication

Any communication in Instagram contains at least one image. The tone is hardly serious, it is good to choose a short message that is effective and directly related to the visual content. Often the text is partly within the image itself.

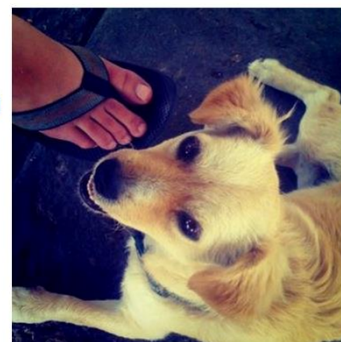
Some syntax rules

Texts cannot exceed 2,200 characters because they are intended as captions for photos. Ideally, you should stay within 125 characters, so that the message will be all visible without requiring the audience to click again. This is crucial because Instagram is natively a social media for smartphones.



2010, October

**1.074 billion
active
monthly
users**



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Instagram hashtags should follow the text separated from the caption by a line or dots and should be chosen carefully.

They are very useful to increase the visibility of your post and to reach those users who may be interested in your topic.

Instagram does not have a real text editor (you cannot wrap or change the font except with accessory tools for professionals).

To get around this limitation it is useful to use emoticons or write the text in another app (e.g. 'notes' on your smartphone) , copy the formatted text and paste it into the caption of the Instagram post

Common scams and risks to watch out for

Such a widespread social media attracts the malicious and many scams are perpetrated daily against the naivest users. One of these is the one in which the user is tagged in a story as the winner of an expensive object (latest I-phone model for example). It is a good idea not to reply, to report the user and never to give out one's personal data.



2.10.4. WhatsApp

WhatsApp is an instant messaging system but is now integrated with popular social media.

The creators, Jan Koum and Brian Acton, are former Yahoo! employees who aspired to join the Facebook team before embarking on their adventure.

The idea for WhatsApp was born in 2009 when Jan Koum started thinking about creating an app that would allow users to have conversations with friends, colleagues, family etc. The first funding of \$250,000 came from some friends at Yahoo.

The goal is to allow interference-free, immediate and fast communication, without games and without advertisements.

The beginnings were not so easy that Koum was tempted to give up.

In 2009, WhatsApp was available in the app store for iPhones and a couple of months later a version for Blackberrys was also ready.

Since then, the application has grown exponentially and in 2013 it already had over 200 million users and enticed Facebook to acquire it for around \$19 billion.

Zuckerberg's investment is repaid by success and in 2016 there are more than 1 billion users and still growing.

Koum and Acton remain at the helm and the logo is the same one they designed at the beginning.

What kind of communication

It also allows written chats with several people through the definition of groups, the sending of images and documents, call conferences in twos or groups. It is also a popular collaboration tool that speeds up the transfer of information. It has a widely used PC version.

It is increasingly being used in marketing.

Some syntax rules

There are no specific rules.



2009

**1.6 billion
active users,
in over 180
countries
worldwide.**



Developed by LABC from Creative Commons images



Common scams and risks to watch out for

Chain letters have found their new channel here, facilitated by the simplicity with which messages can be forwarded and spread. For this reason, WhatsApp has included a limit of 5 possible 'forwards' per message and the impossibility of multiple forwards.

These measures were introduced during the pandemic to limit the spread of hoaxes about the coronavirus. Forwarded messages are distinguishable from others by a double arrow icon.



2.10.5. E-mail

The birth of the Internet is due to the ARPANET (Advanced Research Projects Agency Network) project that the US Department of Defence initiated in September 1969 to facilitate communication between different departments.

The first experience of online communication had been developed in 1965 at MIT in Boston: the MAILBOX programme that allowed students to send messages to their colleagues. It was an innovative system at the time but rather crude-

It was Ray Tomlinson, from the ARPANET team, who invented a programme that allowed agency employees to communicate, giving birth to the modern e-mail.

The first e-mail was sent in October 1971, quickly supplanting the telegraph (1930s) and the Telex (1960s).

It was Tomlinson himself who invented the snail that served to identify the recipient. The first addresses are constructed as username@nomecomputer.

The success of ARPANET prompted the development of the programme to improve the service: in 1975, John Vittel realised the functionality to organise the messages sent and Shiva Ayyadura divided the boxes into 'inbox messages' and 'outbox messages'.

The first mailing lists were born, i.e. discussion groups using e-mail, and in 1980 emoticons were introduced.

When the first Internet Service Providers appeared, the scope of e-mail no longer had any boundaries.

E-mail services in their early days are very different from the ones we know and were inspired by Microsoft Outlook (1992).

Since the arrival of Hotmail in 1996, followed by Yahoo Mail, e-mail has been online.

Currently and since 2007, it is Gmail that dominates the market also thanks to its recent integration into a large office suite.

The evolution of e-mail is certified e-mail. This is an application capable of producing communications accompanied by a legal digital certificate. In Italy, it is a requirement for communications with government bodies. In this regard, the situation is not homogeneous within the European Union and a complex approval process is underway.

The PEC box resembles a standard e-mail box, but the message path is traced. The sender gets confirmation of receipt and reading, and the message cannot be altered.



1971

widespread,
pervasive



Developed by LABC from Creative Commons images



In Italy, having a PEC is mandatory for any business activity.

What kind of communication

E-mails are now so widespread that they are not part of the context. The tone depends on the writer, the receiver, and the aim of the communication.

A large part of the syntactic rules of communication through texts derives from what has been developed at the linguistic level with e-mails.

Some syntax rules

The rules are derived from the rules of written communication in letters. The always valid advice is not to write verbose or redundant texts, to use bullet points to outline concepts and not to abuse images that weigh down the transmission of the message.

In addition, there are some alerts to consider in order to fully master communication:

- 1) Writing in CAPITAL letters is conventionally equivalent to shouting (to be used wisely so as not to upset the interlocutor)
- 2) Copy only the addresses of the people that are actually involved (we are now overrun with e-mails and many are in danger of not being read)
- 3) Choose subjects that are relevant, comprehensible, and ready for archiving.

Common scams and risks to watch out for

Many types of scams can be perpetrated via e-mail, but this is the ideal environment for phishing. Mails very similar to the real thing in content, layout and sender are sent requesting personal codes and data, secret passwords, and access to banking services.

And it is a good rule never to disclose one's codes even to the organisations that issued them!

Less dangerous but, until a few years ago, very widespread are chain letters, a system for multiplying a message by prompting the recipient to multiply the mailings on the basis of superstition, the promise of a win or a gain.

This practice already existed before digital communication and dates back to the tradition according to which inducing friends and acquaintances to pray to a saint was a way to obtain his benevolence and the fulfilment of requests.

Today, chain letters are mostly found on WhatsApp.



3. FURTHER READING

- *A Quick Guide to Setting-up Social Media Accounts for Your Business*: <https://aspireinternetdesign.com/social-media-blogging/quick-guide-setting-social-media-accounts-business/>
- Steven Levy, *Facebook: The Inside Story*, February 25, 2020, Blue Rider Press
- Jason Steinhauer, *History, Disrupted: How Social Media and the World Wide Web Have Changed the Past*, 2022, Palgrave Macmillan
- Movie: *The social Network*, by David Fincher, 2010, Columbia Picture.
- At the following links you can find some videos about critical thinking:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dItUGF8GdTw>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NHjgKe7JMNE>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vNDYUlxNIAA>

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