

Book Review: *Methods for Analyzing Social Media*

Klaus, B., Hunniger, J., & Jensen, J. L. (Eds.). (2013). *Methods for Analyzing Social Media*. New York: Routledge.

Mark Kattoura, PhD
Adjunct Faculty Member
School of Communication and Multimedia Studies
Florida Atlantic University
markakattoura@gmail.com

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In an era when so many books offer basic instructions and tips for using only one social media outlet without offering the reader much insight on the individual, social, and cultural implications that accompany the creation and usage of such media, the editors of “Methods for Analyzing Social Media” take a refreshingly comprehensive and inclusive yet accessible approach to the genre. The book’s introduction, and the 10 chapters or articles that follow, focus on case studies of social media methodologies encompassing several popular brands, in an effort to comprehensively answer the many questions regarding how to develop methods and strategies for effectively analyzing social media both qualitatively and quantitatively. Indeed, the series’ strong point and mass appeal comes in its interweaving and illustrating the equally important contributions of the qualitative and quantitative elements of social media communication that are often overlooked, discounted, or discarded altogether.

Having been originally designed and published as individual articles and case studies by different authors and editors throughout Europe primarily as well as the United States, the texts have been thoughtfully compiled to guide students and scholars of social media alike to simplify and make sense out of what might seem like a daunting but inevitable process, given the perpetually changing nature of the internet in general and social media in particular. The first two articles-turned-chapters, written respectively by Fabio Giglietto, Luca Rossi, and Davide Bennato, and Axel Bruns and Stefan Stieglitz, discuss three of the current moment’s most

popular and prevalent social media platforms – Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube – in terms of their abilities to offer opportunities for comparative research for ethnographical, statistical, and computational purposes using specific cases as examples. Likewise, the last two chapters, authored individually by Matthew Crick and Tara La Rose, are dedicated to analyzing the impact of YouTube on youth learning, neighborhood communication patterns, and human service work.

Recognizing that in order to fully understand and apply the outlets themselves requires a nuanced knowledge of the contexts and users involved in the process, the third, fourth, and seventh, articles – titled respectively “Communities of Communication: Making Sense of the ‘Social’ in Social Media” by Pascal Jurgens, “Talking of Many Things: Using Topical Networks to Study Discussions in Social Media,” authored by Tim Highfield, and “Employing Creative Research Methods with Tweens in Estonia and Sweden: Reflections on a Case Study of Identity Construction on Social Networking Sites,” written by the team of Andra Siiback, Michael Forsman, and Patrik Hernwall, are devoted to analyzing the participation levels and intent of individual and young users and by gender, and how such individuals form, influence, and are influenced by these “social communities.” Other chapters, written respectively by Stine Lomborg, and Marco Lunich, Patrick Rossler, and Lena Hautzer, discuss the usefulness of topics ranging from web archiving to online news media and news sharing, in rounding out the elements necessary to fully understand individual social media use.

The book concludes, perhaps appropriately and in final defense of the often-criticized benefits of social media, with a chapter by Martine Bouman, Constance Drossaert, and Marcel Pieterse, titled “Mark My Words: The Design of an Innovative Methodology to Detect and Analyze Interpersonal Conversations in Web and Social Media,” that attempts to apply a

methodology also called “Mark My Words” to interpersonal communication on social media, in order to “measure the potential impact of new digital health communication formats.” This case study in particular serves as a clear sign of how social media can be used to bridge even the most technical differences in language between people to literally improve health and save lives.

The volume carries great appeal with its diversity of regional and international voices and perspectives on social media research and methodology. The inclusion of articles and studies from scholars on opposite ends of the globe, all of which include clear description and explanation of relevant background, methodology, analysis, and conclusions, reinforces the reality that the internet has its own “language” that bridges all others and allows people with different goals and outlooks to nevertheless find commonalities to work together for personal, professional, and social benefit and for the mutual global good. In addition, the book’s discussion of several of the most popular and useful yet often criticized social media outlets of the moment demonstrates that the editors recognize the nuances and purposes of each outlet rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. Additionally, the inclusion of ample and well-placed and labeled illustrations, graphs, and charts helps to ensure complete understanding of the material for more visual learners.

On the other hand, the ever-changing nature and design of the internet and of individual social media outlets, driven in part by enhancements and changes in technology as well as by the fickle and always ambitious and competitive attitudes of the public, means that much of the book’s content has a relatively short or limited shelf life, although it does serve as a valuable snapshot of where we are now. Thus, it provides a solid starting point for those involved in

social media research who are hoping to better and more fully understand where we are, how we got here, and where we might be headed next.

The 187-page hardback Routledge book was released in July 2013 and is priced at \$145.00.