

BOOK REVIEW

The Social Media Debate: Unpacking the Social, Psychological, and Cultural Effects of Social Media

Rosen, D., Ed. (2022). *The social media debate: Unpacking the social, psychological, and cultural effects of social media*. Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group. 234 pp. ISBN: 978-0-367-76751-8

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In a society and a world where social media plays a part of everyday life, many questions about the effects of social media on our world and lives are asked. These questions can be overwhelming and a guide to get started would be helpful. Devon Rosen offers just that in his book *The Social Media Debate: Unpacking the Social, Psychological, and Cultural Effects of Social Media* (2022). Rosen presents a collection of essays by scholars from diverse fields. These essays cover a variety of topics such as: how the monetization of the internet has influenced how people experience it, how politics and political entities shape and are shaped by social media, what voices are underrepresented, and the psychological repercussions of social media. The book's essays contend with social media's macro and micro effects.

The essays that deal with the macro effects of social media in *The Social Media Debate* delineate how Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter (now known as X) and so on, present themselves as democratic platforms, but are far from being so. For example, these platforms give users the illusion of control while their experience is largely shaped for them behind the scenes. Additionally, these experiences are created by a handful of companies based in one location (Silicon Valley). Some contributors discuss how social

media has been used by the masses to challenge political authority in their countries and how political authorities have used and limited social media to maintain a narrative of their own. The essays that discuss the micro effects focus on individual experiences. These discussions cover the many issues individuals from underrepresented groups (such as people of color) deal with on social media. There are also contributors who discuss the psychological effects of social media on both adults and children. Though there is no evidence presented to suggest there are negative psychological effects directly caused by social media use, these essays open the door to further research methods and areas to refine this argument. For example, one highlight is the essay discussing social media content moderators and the mental trauma they contend with.

The Social Media Debate, while dated, still serves as an important start to the overwhelming number of subjects within Social Media Studies. The book was published in 2022 and there has certainly been more research in all the subjects covered in Rosen's collection, but it is a great place to begin. The collection, while not exhaustive, does cover issues that are still relevant in social media. One downfall of some of the essays is that they leave more questions than answers to problems in social media.

This is still a great starting point and a very concise and easy-to-read book on the subject. Many of the acronyms are spelled out to give the uninitiated understanding as to their meanings and the research methods are clearly explained. This book is written both for novices and those with experience in Social Media studies. This is a highly recommended book for anyone interested in this area.