Collaborated mourning using web2: The impact of web2 over behavior patterns / Zafririt Baharav Bavli

Abstract

The internet has entered every part of our lives and thus created room for a wide range of mourning demonstrations. Some of these manifestations of grieving are similar to those outside cyber space, and others are different. The development of web2 has enabled unique interactive mourning expressions, with an intensity that was not possible before. Being able to express your grief actively, in the presence and with the support of others, is a helpful component in dealing with bereavement (Brom, Calver & Van Den Baut, 1993). In addition, web2 technology has opened up new ways to express and deal with grief, in active, individual and collective methods, while receiving support from many people (Granot, 2000). This new platform releases the mourner from time and space constraints, and has an element of anonymity to it that enables new ways of expression we haven't encountered before. Moreover, web2's interactive tools allow actively memorializing the figure while carrying on with everyday life.

This research examines the mourning demonstrations that are developing on the web2 platform and include all forms of media - text, music, animation, pictures and drawings. These different means of expression allow more people to convey their angst in an individual manner, yet feel part of a grieving group and receive significant social support.

The results of this research are discussed in two parts: The first part examines the characteristics of manifestations of mourning on web2 tools such as Facebook, Wikipedia, Flickr and Youtube; The second part examines the contribution of web2 mourning demonstrations to the process of dealing with loss.

The study group included 60 members of a social network, 30 from dense networks, and 30 from sparse networks. Four social networks were examined: Facebook, Flickr, Youtube and ZochrimPedia. In addition, an internet questionnaire was given to 17 bereaved parents to obtain information on their ways of coping, difficulties, and emotional changes over time. A "built-in questionnaire" (Shkedi, 2003) was used in this qualitative research. The interviewees were asked to relate their story, guided by questions with the keywords "what", "how", "where", etc. However, the subject in this kind of interview is not limited in his answers. In addition, a "closed-ended questionnaire" (Shkedi, 2003) was prepared, with alternative answers from which the subject chooses the one closest to his / her approach. This kind of questionnaire allows exploring approaches of users to the specific questions in this research. The interviews and questionnaires, created on an internet system for research purposes, were sent via the social networks to 40 members. A "semi-built-in" interview (Shkedi, 2003) was given to senior executives in the Ministry of Defense to allow comparison between state and individual emotional considerations for dealing with loss.

It appears from the findings that the technological advantages offered by social networks are fully utilized by users in dealing with grief. People express their feelings in social networks with great creativity, and so it is impossible to characterize a set pattern. Web2 technology has raised the technological level of the internet, but moreover has supplied an open stage for users, with maximal sharing and a cyber embrace in return.

This research also employed a "case study" (Shkedi, 2003), a research method based on the qualitative paradigm. The case chosen was the mourning of Assaf Ramon's demise. From web2 social networks four were chosen, one of each kind. Facebook – for dialogue between users, Flickr – for uploading pictures, Youtube – for uploading movies, ZochrimPedia – a collaborative encyclopedia.

Three patterns of grieving could be identified in all four networks. Some users chose to perpetuate a certain moment in Assaf's life and described it through the social network. Others chose to describe a lifetime with Assaf, briefly surveying

15 to 20 years together. In a third pattern, people chose to describe the life they would have experienced with Assaf if it were not for his passing.

Three main elements characterize the groups. The first is enlarging the circle of mourners by calling others on the social network to join it. The second is the geographical expansion of grief from Ramat Gan, through the State of Israel, and all the way to Los Angeles. The circle of friends crosses borders and continents and reaches the other side of the world within a few days. The third element is the usage of metaphors, movies, pictures, songs and tunes, put together especially for remembrance. These elements are possible thanks to the availability and depth of web2 social networks. In real life and on flat internet (without web2), many efforts are required in order to be in touch with people. The new web2 technology provides simple and accessible tools to achieve the same goal.

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross (2002), a Swiss-born psychiatrist, defined five stages in the process by which people deal with the grief of losing someone close to them. Other psychologists support this opinion and add that a person must go through a healthy grieving period that includes all five stages, in order to emerge into normal life after experiencing tragedy. The social networks offer support during all stages, and in particular in the final stage – the acceptance of loss. Commemoration websites on social networks are available at any time and place, thus giving vent to emotions and providing constant support.

A common characteristic of commemorative websites on web2 social networks is their quiet, melancholy style; black headlines, formal straightforward fonts, white background, pictures conveying sadness. However, the ways to express this sadness vary, using associations, mythological stories, song writing and rhyme. As opposed to these web2 sites, commemorative monuments on the internet convey stateliness and must follow strict rules of font and picture size, number of words and background.

The results of this research lead to a clear conclusion that social networks allow the circle of mourners freedom of expression, a freedom that enables the user to express his or her feelings and convey open or hidden messages. The need to express

emotions openly rather than withholding them is supported by Elizabeth Kübler-Ross's five stages of grief (Kübler-Ross, 2002).

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