

# Digital Mass Interaction in The Network Society

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***Abstract***—Digital chat and social media technologies have moved far beyond their original function as simple tools of communication. They now shape how people coordinate daily life, perform identity, build relationships, manage visibility, and interpret social status. This article offers a literature-based analytical review of digital mass interaction in the network society, drawing on secondary sources that address WhatsApp, Instagram, social media, networked communication, domestication, stigma, self-presentation, and cultural capital. The discussion brings together Manuel Castells’ network society thesis, Roger Silverstone’s domestication perspective, Erving Goffman’s account of stigma and impression management, Judith Butler’s theory of performativity, and Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital. Taken together, these frameworks show that digital interaction is neither purely liberating nor wholly disruptive. It expands access, speed, and participation, but it also intensifies comparison, pressure, emotional exposure, and the demand for continuous availability. The paper argues that contemporary digital culture should be understood as a condition of persistent mass interaction in which communication, identity, and everyday institutions are reorganized through networked platforms.

***Index Terms***—Digital chat, network society, media technologies, social media, identity, domestication, mass interaction, contemporary society.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Digital communication has become one of the defining features of contemporary social life. A message can now move instantly across family groups, classrooms, workplaces, neighbourhoods, and global publics, making communication faster, more frequent, and more portable than in earlier media environments. The rise of chat applications and social media platforms has therefore altered not only the speed of exchange but also the social meaning of exchange itself. What once required physical presence, scheduled contact, or formal channels is increasingly accomplished through always-on digital platforms.

This article is a secondary-source analytical review. It does not report field data or survey findings. Instead, it synthesizes the arguments found in the supplied literature in order to explain how digital mass interaction has become a central feature of the network society. The focus is not only on what these technologies do technically, but on how they reorganize everyday routines, social relationships, self-presentation, educational practice, and cultural expectation.

The paper also treats WhatsApp and Instagram as representative examples of larger transformations in communication culture. WhatsApp illustrates the domestication of messaging in family life, education, and informal coordination, while Instagram highlights the visual, performative, and status-oriented dimensions of digital visibility. Read together, they show that digital mass interaction is not a single phenomenon. It is a layered social process that connects infrastructure, identity, emotion, and power [1], [2].

## II. DIGITAL CHAT AS EVERYDAY INFRASTRUCTURE

Chat platforms have become everyday infrastructure because they are cheap, convenient, and embedded in mobile routines. Their popularity lies not only in technical efficiency but also in social usability. Users can send text, voice notes, images, documents, locations, and short videos within a single interface, which makes the platform flexible enough to serve personal, educational, and professional needs. As the literature on WhatsApp shows, the platform is valued precisely because it compresses many forms of communication into one continuous stream [7], [8].

This convenience, however, produces a new kind of communicative expectation. Messages are often read quickly and answered quickly. Social presence becomes continuous rather than occasional. Family members may remain in touch across physical distance, but that same constant accessibility can also make privacy thinner and time boundaries weaker [6], [9]. In this sense, chat platforms do not merely support communication; they reshape the tempo of communication.

The educational uses of chat apps also demonstrate this double character. Studies in the supplied material indicate that instant messaging can support collaboration, clarify tasks, strengthen student-teacher contact, and extend learning beyond the classroom [7], [10]. At the same time, message flooding, distraction, and the pressure to remain responsive can produce fatigue and reduced concentration [8], [10]. Digital chat therefore functions both as an educational aid and as a source of cognitive overload.

Seen from this angle, chat technologies are best understood as social infrastructure. They are not neutral containers for exchange. They structure timing, visibility, attention, and interactional norms. In contemporary society, these matters because coordination itself has become a social skill. Being digitally present is now part of being socially present.

## III. SOCIAL MEDIA, VISIBILITY, AND IDENTITY PERFORMANCE

If messaging platforms organize coordination, social media platforms organize visibility. Instagram-style environments invite users to present themselves through images, captions, stories,

reels, and measured reactions. What is displayed is never only personal life; it is also a curated version of personal life. The platform rewards polished presentation, visual coherence, and audience engagement, which encourages users to think carefully about how they appear to others. Erving Goffman's work on stigma and impression management is useful here because it shows that social life involves ongoing self-presentation [3]. People do not simply reveal themselves; they manage impressions, anticipate evaluation, and adjust their behavior according to audience expectations. In digital spaces, this process becomes more deliberate because the audience is often larger, less visible, and more persistent than in face-to-face settings. A profile, post, or selfie can be read as a public performance that invites approval, comparison, or criticism.

Judith Butler's theory of performativity deepens this discussion by showing that identity is not fixed in advance but repeatedly produced through acts, styles, and repeated social cues [4]. Digital platforms intensify this repetition. A person posts, edits, filters, deletes, reposts, and comments until an acceptable version of the self emerges. The online self is therefore not a simple reflection of the offline self. It is an actively constructed form of presentation shaped by platform logic and audience response.

The supplied literature on selfies and emotional contagion further suggests that digital visibility is not emotionally neutral. Images, reactions, and circulation can influence mood, aspiration, and self-comparison [12]. In environments where likes and followers operate as public indicators of value, users may internalize a strong pressure to look successful, attractive, informed, or socially desirable. The result is a culture in which visibility becomes a currency and identity becomes increasingly performative.

This does not mean that digital self-presentation is merely artificial. It can also be creative, strategic, empowering, and socially meaningful. Many users' express solidarity, humor, activism, personal style, or community identity through their profiles. The key point is that identity in the digital age is negotiated within a system that rewards attention and legibility. The person becomes both author and product of the digital performance.

#### IV. NETWORK SOCIETY AND THE LOGIC OF CONNECTED LIFE

Manuel Castells' concept of the network society offers the broadest frame for understanding these developments [1]. Castells argues that contemporary social organization is increasingly built around networks of communication, information, and flow. In such a society, connectivity is not a secondary feature of life; it is one of the main ways social life is organized. Digital mass interaction is therefore not an accidental by-product of new devices. It is a structural condition of networked modernity. Castells' approach helps explain why digital communication has become so powerful across social domains. Information travels rapidly, spatial distance becomes less decisive, and people are able to maintain relationships across multiple settings at once. Families, workplaces, schools, and cultural communities all adapt to the logic of networked coordination. This is why a single chat platform can support emotional conversation, institutional communication, and public circulation at the same time [1], [6]. Roger Silverstone's domestication perspective adds an important household dimension to this argument [2]. Technologies become

socially important when they are absorbed into everyday routines and normalized within domestic life. The platform is first adopted for a practical reason, then incorporated into habits, and finally treated as ordinary. Once that happens, it no longer feels like an external tool. It becomes part of the moral and social fabric of daily life. This is visible in family groups, school announcements, work coordination, and religious or community sharing.

Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital helps explain why digital participation is unevenly valued [5]. Not everyone enters digital space with the same language skills, aesthetic sensibilities, device access, or platform literacy. Some users possess the embodied abilities that make them more effective communicators online. Others convert their digital presence into visibility, credibility, or status. In this sense, digital mass interaction is also a field of distinction, where tastes and competencies are socially rewarded.

Together, Castells, Silverstone, and Bourdieu show that digital life is both structural and unequal. The network society connects people, but it also sorts them. It enables participation, but it also distributes visibility unevenly. It brings convenience, but it also produces new forms of symbolic pressure.

#### *FAMILY LIFE, EDUCATION, AND THE NORMALIZATION OF CHAT*

One of the most important findings in the secondary material is that chat technologies are now embedded in ordinary family communication. Families use digital messages for routine updates, emotional support, coordination of travel, event planning, and the sharing of photos, voice clips, and reminders [6], [9]. Such uses may seem informal, but they are socially significant because they allow family interaction to continue even when members live apart or follow different schedules. At the same time, digital family communication can shift expectations within and across generations. Younger users often adapt quickly to platform culture, while older users may adopt the same tools more cautiously or more selectively. This creates a form of intergenerational negotiation in which the meaning of responsiveness, respect, and availability is constantly being redefined. A delayed reply can now be interpreted as busyness, disinterest, or distance depending on context.

Education is another area where the normalization of chat is especially visible. The literature reviewed here shows that WhatsApp can support peer learning, teacher-student interaction, and quick clarification of academic matters [7], [8], [10]. Yet it can also disrupt concentration, blur boundaries between study and leisure, and create pressure for constant participation. These tensions matter because educational platforms are no longer separate from social life; they are part of it. The larger implication is that digital chat has become a normal language of institutional life. Schools, offices, and households all rely on it. What used to be considered informal communication now performs formal tasks. That shift is one of the clearest signs that the network society has entered everyday practice.

*OPPORTUNITY, RISK, AND THE CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS PRESENCE*

The effects of digital mass interaction are best described as mixed. On the positive side, these technologies widen access to communication, reduce the cost of connection, and allow people to build and maintain social ties across distance. They also create opportunities for learning, public expression, entrepreneurship, and community support [7], [10], [11].

On the negative side, the same technologies can encourage compulsive checking, emotional dependence, comparison anxiety, and attention fragmentation. Social media platforms frequently reward engagement, which means that users are encouraged to stay visible, stay active, and stay responsive. When this logic is combined with likes, comments, followers, and algorithmic amplification, digital participation can become psychologically demanding [11], [12].

Stigma is also relevant in this environment. Goffman's analysis suggests that stigma emerges through social classification and the management of spoiled identity [3]. Online spaces can intensify that process because audiences are larger and judgments move faster. A single image, post, or rumor may circulate widely, making reputation easier to build but also easier to damage. The same networks that support belonging can therefore also produce exclusion.

This is why contemporary digital culture cannot be reduced to the language of innovation alone. It must also be read through the language of pressure, labor, and inequality. To participate effectively in network society, people often need to learn platform codes, manage audience expectations, and maintain a continuous public self. That work is real social labor.

## V. ANALYTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The literature reviewed in this paper points toward several implications. First, digital platforms should be treated as social environments rather than mere communication tools. Second, institutions such as schools and families should recognize that digital participation has both benefits and costs. Third, the study of digital media should remain theoretically grounded, because frameworks such as network society, domestication, impression management, performativity, and cultural capital reveal different dimensions of the same phenomenon.

A balanced interpretation is necessary. Digital mass interaction does not simply weaken society, nor does it automatically improve it. Instead, it reorganizes society by changing the forms through which presence, attention, and recognition are produced. This reorganization is especially visible in the ways people build identity, manage intimacy, consume media, and participate in public life. Future scholarship can extend this approach by comparing different platforms, different generations, and different social settings. Even without primary data, a literature-based analysis can show how digital life is structured by recurring social patterns. The central lesson is that platform culture is never just technical. It is cultural, relational, and political.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Digital mass interaction has become a defining condition of the network society. Messaging apps and social media platforms have transformed communication from an occasional act into a

continuous social environment. They enable connection, speed, participation, and creative self-expression, but they also intensify visibility, comparison, pressure, and social monitoring.

By bringing together Castells, Silverstone, Goffman, Butler, and Bourdieu, this review shows that digital platforms operate at several levels at once: they are technologies, routines, performances, and systems of distinction. Their importance lies not only in what they allow people to do, but in how they reorganize everyday life itself. The most accurate conclusion, therefore, is not that digital media are simply good or bad. It is that they have become one of the main arenas in which contemporary society is now lived, negotiated, and displayed.

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