

# **FROM BLOGS TO PLATFORMS: CONTENT LANDSCAPE AND AFFORDANCES**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Since blogs, the number of social media platforms through which consumers express, connect and monetize content multiplied. Furthermore, these platforms are now equipped with a plethora of technical features that expanded their affordances. As platforms incorporated ephemeral, image, video, and streaming-based content, not only have consumers' expressive and experimental opportunities increased, but the lines between promotional and expressive content (and consumption and production of this content) have also blurred. This chapter focuses on the various affordances provided by content platforms and offers future researchers a theoretical toolkit to study content creation and consumption.

## Introduction

It has been eight years since Arsel and Zhao wrote about blogs. Their chapter, written at the beginning of what ended up being a radical digital turn, identified blogs as a new and evolving platform for expressive content. They discussed 1) the production of blogs as a medium for expressing and experimenting with identity through representation and reinterpretation of consumption experiences; 2) the consumption of blogs as cultural resources and cultural catalysts for social influence.

What a radical eight years of change it has been! Evolving from text and image, social platforms have replaced blog-publishing platforms. Unlike blogs, social platforms incorporate ephemeral, video, and streaming content as well as new linking affordances provided by technical features such as hashtags and mentions. These new affordances not only expanded people's expressive, socialization, and experimental opportunities but also blurred the lines between promotional and expressive content. As internet culture shifted from narrative to memetic and ephemeral content, storytelling also evolved. For example, brand narratives became key resources in content creation (Rokka and Canniford 2016).

In this chapter, we discuss this development briefly, focusing on the evolution of the content creator from blogger to social platform user. We then examine the affordances introduced by several popular platforms. Through this, we unveil how users leverage affordances beyond self-representation and social interaction and increasingly use platforms for monetization and activism. We also contrast this with the limited affordances of blog-publishing platforms to

better highlight the evolution of platform affordances. We hope our chapter provides scholars with a toolkit to study online content creation and consumption.

## **From Blogs to Social Platforms**

“In real life, we do not enter a public space and start announcing what we ate for lunch, which shampoo we used when we showered in the morning, or which shoes we are coveting.” Arsel and Zhao (2013) wrote eight years ago. They couldn’t have been more wrong. Today’s platforms have intercepted deep into people’s existence, allowing them to broadcast the minutia of their lives as they happen. For many, platforms are a part of the so-called “real life.” Of the 7.7 billion global population, at least 3.78 billion are projected to be using these online platforms in 2021 (Statista 2021). Unsurprisingly, Facebook is currently the most popular social media platform, with YouTube, Whatsapp, and Instagram following in popularity with 2.74, 2.29, 2, and 1.28 billion monthly active users, respectively (ibid).

These platforms also allow people to socialize, gain status, and monetize creative content. They perform online self-representation, engage with an audience, and create, curate, and disperse their self-brand (Abidin 2016, 2018; Marwick 2013; Senft 2013). All engaged users on social media do this. However, when their online performances surpass a hobby and are leveraged to establish a career in the digital economy, they become known as influencers, “vocational, sustained, and highly branded social media stars” (Abidin 2018, 71).

By accruing social, economic, and cultural capital, bloggers (or social platform users) become influencers. They do so by constructing and maintaining a professional person brand (Erz and Christensen 2018; Labrecque, Markos, and Milne 2011; Smith and Fischer 2020). This person-representative brand is consumed and recognized by an audience (Fournier and Eckhardt 2019; Parmentier, Fischer, and Reuber 2013). We note that constructing and maintaining a person brand narrative is distinct from previously studied blogger accounts due to the ways platforms operate and users leverage the new affordances of these platforms.

Expression via social media platforms differs across and within platforms due to technological affordances, idiosyncrasies between people in terms of how they use technology, and the different social contexts associated with the platforms' software (Marwick 2013). Much like individuals construct their offline identities through "a bricolage of consumer goods, media, fashion, and styles, online profile," online identities are also constructed using the same artifacts as offline identities, through navigating the social affordances of social platforms (Marwick 2013, 358). Therefore, it is essential to better understand these affordances and the technical features through which they are produced.

## **A World of Affordances**

Affordances were first introduced by ecological psychologist James Gibson (1977), who defines the concept as the environment's provisions to the animals which inhabit it. A specific natural environment's terrain may afford animals particular mobility capacities. Unlike Gibson, who conceived affordances as objective in what they offer, Norman (1988) posited that affordances

are not merely defined by their actual properties but also their perceived functions (9). Following Gibson and Norman, the concept of affordances has been operationalized by scholars in various ways to explain the interaction between humans and their environments. We focus on its definitions within the social media literature. Scholars have identified specific types of platform affordances that shape users' experiences online: warm and cold affordances (Trepte 2015), imagined affordances (Nagy and Neff 2015), and social affordances (Schmidt 2007). At a broader level, affordances have been categorized as either abstract (high-level) or concrete (feature-oriented, low-level) (Bucher and Helmond 2017). Boyd (2011) finds that social network sites, as a form of networked publics, are pillared by four foundational, high-level affordances: persistence, replicability, scalability, and searchability. These four high-level affordances facilitate and steer the engagement of users on social media platforms (ibid). On the other hand, low-level affordances are related to the platform's materiality and technical functions, controlled by features, buttons, and interfaces within platforms (Bucher and Helmond 2017).

The concept of affordances has been used by a myriad of scholars and designers. However, there is a lack of consensus on its definition across disciplines and its adaptation to different phenomena (Oliver 2005). To address critiques, Davis and Chouinard (2017) develop a framework that takes into account the degree and manner in which affordances operate and are leveraged through interrelated mechanisms that arise through the tension between "subject agency and technological efficacy" (246). Similarly, Evans et al. (2017) develop a set of three minimum threshold criteria that can be used by communication scholars to identify an affordance. In order to correctly classify their concept as an affordance, one must answer no to

the following two questions, “is it a feature?” and “is it an outcome?”, and yes to this final question, “does it vary?”

To avoid further muddling this terrain, it is important to establish how we use the term. We follow Evans et al. (2017) and distinguish between technical features of social platforms, the varying levels of constraining and enabling affordances (boyd 2011; Bucher and Helmond 2017), and the outcomes of people’s interaction with these technical features. We also acknowledge Gibson’s definition of affordance as we recognize the real capacities afforded to social and blogging platform users rather than perceived affordances. Throughout the chapter, we link technical features of the platforms to capacities and abilities that are generated through people’s agentic interactions with them (affordances) and how people achieve concrete socio-material consequences (outcomes). We summarize this tripartite distinction in Table 1.

<TABLE 1 HERE>

Scholars investigated both the many affordances provided by a singular platform (Bazarova and Choi 2014; Jaidka, Zhou, and Lelkes 2019, Jung and Sundar 2018) and a single affordance within a specific platform ranging from high-level visibility (Lane, Ramirez, and Pearce 2018), to low-level live streaming (Meisner and Ledbetter 2020; Scheibe, Fietkiewicz, and Stock 2016). This chapter contributes to affordance literature by serving as a systematic overview of different platform affordances.

We draw upon affordance literature and the structure of the interfaces offered by social platforms to categorize the capacities and constraints they provide to their users. We include blogs in this

comparison because they still exist and serve as a benchmark to understand how social media has evolved in affordances. We choose *Blogger*, a platform developed in 1999, as this benchmark. Its longevity, similarity to the past blogging platforms, and current availability allow us to use it as an ideal type for this category. In addition to Blogger, the platforms we choose to study in-depth are Snapchat, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and TikTok. We sampled these platforms as they exemplify diverse manners of user engagement to ensure we cover the entire platform terrain. In doing so, we also show how affordances have expanded from visual and narrative capacities to a new range of socio-material engagements. We posit that social platforms have interfaces that provide their users with expressive, connective, commercial, and co-creative affordances.

*Expressive Affordances.* People have been expressing their identities via the internet since the early 90s. Turkle (1995) explains that “computer-mediated communication can serve as a place for construction or reconstruction of identity” (342). This is still valid in the social media landscape and more so now with platforms offering a plethora of expressive affordances.

By expressive, we mean the capacity to create and share content (text, images, videos, audio, and other combinations) for self, identity, political, affective, and creative expression. Expressive affordances differ between platforms via their flexibility (the range of the scale of content that a platform allows its users to post), scope (the type of content that a user is permitted to construct and display), and ephemerality (the temporal transience of the content). Firstly, through many technical features, platforms present interfaces to users that provide affordances to self-express using a variety of media forms, be it text, images, and video. To fully comprehend the expressive



capacities of social platforms, we choose to compare them with the affordances available to users of *Blogger*, a blog publishing platform. While *Blogger*'s primary mode of content is text, the platform now affords its users the capacity to share visual content, image, and video footage. Unlike a social platform, a blog affords the ability to format, design, and customize the visual environment (i.e., background image, colors, text font, sizes, colors, menu) and allows users to tap into a grander scope of expression through their construction of macro-content. Thus, unlike social platforms, which have fixed visual appearance, *Blogger* and similar publishing platforms provide technical features that afford users the capacity to manipulate the macro-content, providing a different scope of expressivity.

On the other hand, social platforms afford their users to modify micro-content (such as using features to edit individual photos or videos) with more capacities than a blog publishing platform. Therefore, while social platforms do not offer capacities to modify macro-content, users are granted a wider variety of technical features to construct and share micro-content. Some social platforms are highly restrictive in their affordance of the scope of expression. For instance, an extreme example is Clubhouse's audio-centric platform, described as a live, "free-flowing podcast" (Marcin 2021). Some platforms provide more scope, as they allow the sharing of multiple forms of media, whether they be combined, text within a video on TikTok), or separated (i.e.: a photo and its text caption shared on Facebook or Instagram). However, when it comes to Clubhouse, users are provided with technical features that allow the sharing of audio-only micro-content. Thus, much like an environment's geographical terrain and affordances allows the animals which live on it (Gibson 1977), a social platform's digital structure is what provides and restricts its users' actions on their accounts.

A relatively new expressive affordance, unavailable on blogs, is the ability to augment reality when capturing visual micro-content. The technical feature is colloquially referred to as a filter. The outcome of this affordance is augmented, enhanced, or modified visual appearance in photos or videos to add affect or creative expression. Filters are predominantly used on visual social platforms such as Snapchat, Instagram, and TikTok. Scholars have identified those who enhance social media selfies via filters as individuals who wish to maintain “a positive concept about the self regardless of their actual appearance” (Chae 2017, 374). Prescott (2020) suggests that filters are a virtual form of Goffman’s (1971) stage persona props similar to the ways makeup and clothes are used in everyday life. However, the scholar points to a darker side to this low-level augmentation affordance as it can pressure social media users to maintain an idolized yet fictitious physical appearance.

Expressive affordances can vary in their flexibility, the range of the scale of content users are permitted to share. On Blogger, an outcome of the platform’s expressive flexibility is the blog description’s limit to 500 characters, the account’s capacity to hold up to 15 GB of pictures in storage shared across Google Drive, Gmail, and Google Photos, and a *Page*’s one MB limit.

Since the users of social platforms are not afforded the expressive scope to modify macro-content (general visual appeal, menus, fonts), we can only observe the capacities they can manipulate via the tools to create and disseminate micro-content. For instance, Twitter affords its users self-expression via text and emojis, which translates into an outcome of 280 characters per tweet, while Instagram allows its users to flood their captions with 2,200 characters. Length

restrictions are also imposed for other forms of media. TikTok only allows its users to record 15 to 60-second-long videos via the app, whereas YouTube users can upload up to 12 hours of video content.

A social platform that affords its users to share solely ephemeral content is Snapchat, where shared images or videos are only visible publicly to followers of the account for 24 hours. Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter offer the expressive affordance of ephemerality as an option to their users: stories, a technical feature, are only available to followers for 24 hours. Ephemerality allows users to create content commemorating an outing, displaying their artistic sense, and promoting self-expression (Villaespesa and Wowkowych 2020). Scholars suggest that users intend for ephemeral content to be viewed by their close friends; thus, disclosure about personal or sensitive topics occurs by leveraging technical features which afford expressive ephemerality (Birnholtz et al. 2020). This link between ephemerality and disclosure results from the limitation in persistence and visibility of the content and the duration at which the content remains affiliated with the user (ibid).

*Connective Affordances.* These affordances offer platform users the capacity to connect with other users through features such as *tagging* or *mentions*. Connective affordances can be classified as communicative affordances which “alter communicative practices or habits” (Schrock 2015, 1232). Much like expressive affordances, connective affordances differ in scope, namely their nature of connecting content internally (within the account as an organization method), and externally (to other content and users).

Blogger affords the ability to link content internally within the account, allowing followers to reach specific blogposts from different pages across a site. The internal connective affordance, which establishes connections within the blog and between blog posts, is provided by a technical feature called *labels*. A creator can tag their blog post using as many as 20 labels to categorize the content within the blog site. For instance, if the blog post was about a form of exercise, playing an instrument, or singing, the creator could label it with words such as “hobbies,” “pastime,” “skills,” or any other phrase describing the topic of the post. The purpose is to provide followers links to blog posts that share similar themes within the blog itself. We recognize two outcomes of technical features that afford external connections on blogger: 1) bridging content to other pages on the internet through hyperlinks, and 2) share content on other platforms through the *share button* technical feature, thereby spreading content on other social platforms.

In other platforms, the tagging mechanisms and symbols that activate connective affordances have begun to unify as well, especially to promote cross-platform bridging, given that some platforms are now owned by the same company. Facebook has owned Instagram since 2012 and Whatsapp since 2014 (Shead 2019). The most predominant examples are the hashtag (#) and the at symbol (@). Hashtag feature connects a user’s post to other accounts within the platform seeking or discussing content on the topic referenced after the hashtag symbol. Some scholars view hashtags as a broadcasting mechanism (one-to-many) (Arvidsson and Caliandro 2016; Page 2012), while others view them as a conversational linguistic device that facilitates interpersonal relations (Zappavigna 2015). An example of the former is when users create and share content to cope with widely felt affect on current or common social issues (Abidin and Zeng 2020).

Hashtags also serve a marketing function for brands and influencers as they use them for advertorial instigation, thus increasing a campaign's visibility (Abidin 2016). Advertorial instigation occurs when an Influencer working with a brand asks their followers to share or create posts using the advertorial campaign's dedicated hashtag (ibid). As a result, Abidin states that these "followers become a network of advertorial capillaries by duplicating, amplifying and multiplying the Influencer content to their own circle of followers and personal friends" (89). Through advertorial instigation, an outcome of external connective affordances, companies secure the free labor of followers engaging in electronic word of mouth; and this can be tracked by looking up the hashtag on the platform (ibid).

The @ symbol, or what various platforms call mentions, attracts the attention of a specific account to a particular post. Himelboim and Golan (2019) categorize three types of influencers (Hubs, Bridges, and Isolates) on Twitter according to their connectivity via mentions. Hubs have a high retweet rate, Bridges are mentioned by other users who develop parasocial relations with them, and Isolates are the hidden reason for the virality of specific topics or content. Most importantly, unlike the hashtag feature, which can operate in a one-to-many fashion, mentions allow users to create a one-on-one connection between the individual they @ and their content.

By tapping into technical features, users integrate the @ and # signs into multiple forms of media depending on the platform. While hashtags and mentions can always be used when composing text to share via the platform, users can also add them into their visual content on Instagram and Facebook through the stories feature, thus, affording users the ability to bridge technical features and extend their functionality. Most importantly, connective affordances generate increasing

visibility, whether it be within the privacy of a user's group of friends (Zappavigna 2015) or openly and to many (Arvidsson and Caliandro 2016; Page 2012) within the attention economy (Humphreys 2016; Marwick 2015, Tufekci 2013). Furthermore, connective affordances offer users the ability to disclose commercial partnerships or sponsorships or redirect the audience to sponsored products. Increasingly, however, platforms are developing dedicated technical features responsible for allowing users to commercialize content.

*Commercial Affordances.* When it comes to commercial activities on social platforms, it is vital to observe the three main stakeholders involved: the brand, the influencer, and the consumer. It is financially advantageous for social platforms to afford content creators or influencers and brands the ease of partnership for promotion purposes, and for the latter, swift and uncomplicated transactions with customers. Platforms are now digital markets where the entire process of introducing products to customers via sponsored content and the sale of said products occur seamlessly. Platforms increasingly provide technical features that guide content creators and potential customers through this journey.

Bloggers are provided with a commercial affordance through *AdSense*, a Google technical feature. This allows bloggers host ads on their blog. Bloggers may also choose to monetize by partnering with brands and creating customized blog posts with content that could include embedded hyperlinks leading to the brand's website to promote their products.

Monetizing via social platforms and influencers has been explored academically by media scholars (Johnson and Woodcock 2019; Kopf 2020; Schwemmer and Ziewiecki 2018; Srauy

2015) and business scholars (Hughes, Swaminathan, and Brooks 2019; Martínez-Lopez et al. 2019; McQuarrie, Miller, and Philips 2012; Vrontis et al. 2021). For instance, Facebook users can host a brand's in-stream ads, meaning that users are afforded the capacity to monetize their content by allowing ads to appear within their posts. Brands garner visibility via these ads. Moreover, Facebook content creators and brands can monetize subscriptions to their pages, receive funding from fans through Stars, or host paid online events, technical features provided by the platform. Instagram also provides commercial affordances to users allowing them to collaborate with brands by engaging in product placement, sponsored posts, or becoming an affiliate to receive a share of the sales you elicit. Additionally, Instagram influencers or businesses can integrate product tags on their content, be it a story or a post. Product tags reference the products being sold and transport a potential buyer to an in-app page or their Instagram Shop, where a purchase can occur via checkout on Instagram. On Twitter, users can monetize their tweets by creating partnerships with brands via applications such as SponsoredTweets or PaidPerTweet or by promoting brands and becoming an affiliate who receives a percentage of sales just as they would via Instagram. In 2016, to facilitate the monetization of content, Twitter introduced Twitter Media Studio. Through this technical feature, creators are afforded the capacity to monetize as they gain access to an all-encompassing media library hosting videos, GIFs, images, and Tweet scheduling, as well as team management and multi-account support. The outcome of this commercial affordance is working with industry-leading brands on campaigns, attending exclusive events with creators, and gaining access to analytics across all major social networks.

Commercial affordances are also available to YouTubers as they monetize content through the YouTube Partner Program, whose technical features are advertising partnerships, channel memberships, merch shelf, super chat, super stickers, and YouTube premium revenue (Kopf 2020). The newest of the social platforms we study, TikTok, affords its content creators the chance to monetize through the technical feature of sponsored content posts (Frazier 2020). The outcome for all this is creator revenue.

From the brands' side, both Instagram and TikTok have implemented shoppable ads and in-app checkout features, thereby facilitating brand purchases. On TikTok, brands may tap into the ad offerings feature; examples of such brands are Hollister, Guess, and Gymshark (Alcantra 2019). Hollister opted for an in-feed video ad where shopping is facilitated by a Gen Z-friendly Shop Now technical feature. Shop Now allows access to a microsite where the purchase may occur (ibid). Not only has TikTok allowed in-feed video ads and brand takeover ads amongst user-generated content, but the ad content can also mobilize connective affordances enabled by technical features such as hashtags to increase brand engagement (ibid). Hashtags on TikTok allow people to establish a connection with others participating in challenges via self-generated content. Marketing enabled by the commercial affordances of the in-app features can cost companies from 50 to 150K. Despite the cost of implementing such technical features, leveraging the commerciality of these social platforms leads people to brands' shoppable pages with the outcome being transactions and purchases occurring on mobile devices (ibid).

*Co-creative Affordances.* Social platforms are inherently co-creative, given that they provide a shared virtual space for humans to interact and collaborate on content creation. We identify co-



creative affordances as a form of social affordance that allows different levels and types of collaborations despite geographical proximity, thereby co-creating content. With Blogger, content creators are privy to a technical feature that enable users to co-author a blog by being added as a *team member* with admin access. It is possible to invite 100 team members to co-manage one blog. Once given access, an invited team member can modify the list of admins, the blog's settings or templates, and the blog posts themselves through Blogger's technical features. In a sense, Blogger provides users with a straightforward form of co-creation, given that an invited team member is afforded the same capacities as the original content creator. This virtually unlimited access can be seen as a double-edged sword as the lack of full agency on one's own content creation account may be undesired by the original blogger.

Co-creation regularly occurs between users and other consumers like themselves as virtual social interaction. Direct acts of co-creation occur when users share someone's story or post on their accounts. It also occurs through commenting, replying, and threading. Co-creation on Twitter can occur between people and brands or between people themselves and is afforded by the Quote Tweet technical feature, where commentary is shared along with another account's content. On Instagram and Facebook, users can leverage co-creative technical features to share another user's story or post as their own. TikTok affords its users co-creation opportunities through using the stitch or duet technical feature: the outcome is the co-creation and sharing of videos as responses to another account's video content.

Co-creation can also occur between people and sponsoring actors through hashtag challenges that ask people to create content to respond to a specific call to action. Co-creation is also found

in influencer-sponsored content (Thompson and Malaviya 2012) created as a deliverable for an influencer-brand partnership. There are specific circumstances when co-created content of this nature is more persuasive than advertising content created solely by the brand. Firstly, there must be congruence between ad creators' background traits and the audience's, and secondly, the viewers must have a high level of brand loyalty (ibid).

Scholars have recognized the two formerly mentioned types of co-creation outcomes as distinct sources of value creation: the former (between people without sponsorship) brings sensemaking value and the latter (with commercial interjections) brings economic value (Bechmann and Lomborg 2013). However, we also argue that the boundaries between the two are porous as people may engage with hashtags without being compensated, for pleasure, fun, connection, as a result of being enrolled in advertorial instigation. An example of this is the Guess brand's TikTok hashtag challenge, #inmydenim. This hashtag challenge engaged potential and current consumers by asking them to create a video of themselves looking disheveled first and then glamorous in Guess clothing (Alcantra 2019; Lacombe 2018). The entertainment value of the challenge was adequate to attract many users, thus generating value for the brand through uncompensated labor from platform users.

## **Blogs and Beyond**

This chapter summarizes the state of social platforms and how their affordances have evolved since blogs became a medium for expression, interaction, and influence. While there are countless platforms, blogs have been the prototype for creating spaces for long-form content that

paved the way for citizen journalism (Jones and Slater 2011). Prestigious organizations like Medium, The Conversation, and Huffington Post have leveraged the blog model, aggregating citizen-generated content, to build media empires. Additionally, new platforms such as Substack have incorporated technical features allowing users to self-fund. Blogs have not disappeared but instead became one actor in the platform ecosystem.

At the consumer level, blogs continue to allow people to create focused, long-form, and thematic content. While Facebook and other platforms have somewhat replaced self-expressive diary form, blogs have continued to serve as medium for more niche topics of expression. In recent literature, blogs remain recognized as sites of self-representation and expression, especially for resistance practices by microcommunities and agentic market work. For example, blogs have been recognized as digital sites through which people incite market-level changes in the fashion industry (Dolbec and Fischer 2015). Blogs have also been explored as discursive spaces leveraged by marginalized consumers, such as fatshionistas, to seek greater inclusion in mainstream markets (Scaraboto and Fischer 2013). For example, Harju and Huovinen (2015) explore identity construction and expression of plus-size fashion bloggers as an act of resistance against the normativity of dominant cultural discourses within the fashion industry. The Muslim minority in Germany, a marginalized community and counterpublic, has utilized blogs as an alternative space to challenge the dominant public discourse through discursive practices (Eckert and Chadha 2013). Kavakci and Kraeplin (2017) have studied the Muslim lifestyle bloggers referred to as ‘hijabistas’ and how they construct and reconstruct their digital identities and balance their religious and fashionista identities. Thus, blogs have created, and continue to

flourish, expression and connections for people who might not have access to more conventional ways of institutional power and resources.

Social platforms can also host politicized forms of expression. For instance, political content can be created and shared to express similar ideological stances to an imagined like-minded audience (Literat and Kligler-Vilenchik 2019). Khazraee and Novak's (2018) identify this as a photographic act demonstrating staged participation in a social cause (ibid). Live-streaming (via Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, Twitter, Instagram, Twitch) is another technical feature that taps into the ephemerality affordance, thus allowing users to produce a performance with a simultaneously engaged, and live audience (Meisner and Ledbetter 2020; Scheibe et al. 2016). Activists and politicians frequently leverage this feature, perhaps best exemplified by the unprecedented popularity of Alexandria Ocasio Cortez's twitch stream during the 2020 USA election campaign (Kastrenakes 2020), which was bridged across platforms.

Platforms have given us a choose your own adventure model of expressing, connecting, and monetizing our lives, thoughts, and experiences through content. We can use creative ephemeral content to express fleeting and spur-of-the-moment feelings, connect to people who enjoy the same things we do, write long-form content in political blogs, engage in livestream activism, or accumulate memories virtually. Through this chapter, we noted the dynamic technical features, outcomes, and affordances of social platforms against the backdrop of blogs. While blog-publishing platforms offer users the opportunity to modify their macro-content, their technical features restrict outcomes that concern constructing and modifying micro-content, as well as socialization within the platform. On the other hand, newer platforms host advanced technical

features that allow customization, play, and amplification of micro-content; establishment of connection with other users and brands; and creation and management of sponsored content. Therefore, one could assume that there exists an increase in the variability and range of affordances, be it expressive, connective, commercial, or co-creative, from blog to social platform as technical features multiply. Yet surprisingly, when it comes to macro-content, the inverse is true. Social Platform users have no access to technical features to modify macro-content, thereby giving exclusive agency to social platforms to devise interfaces that critiques have claimed to be designed for addiction (Chen 2020; Lupinacci 2020).

As platform users, we are participating, even inadvertently, in a content economy. Our content is measured, mined, brokered, sold, and used to calibrate marketing and intelligence campaigns, mostly without our consent. While we benefit from our engagement with their affordances, we are increasingly unable to escape the platforms; more importantly, we are creating value for corporations with our content. As data has become gold, we have become uncompensated workers under the premise of posting a picture of our meal, ranting about a day at work, or liking an emotionally loaded post. The social platforms are catering to our dwindling attention spans with flashy content created by individuals who are provided with the technical features to make content easy to consume, interact with, and ultimately pay for with our money, attention, and time.

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Table 1. Platform Affordances, Outcomes, and Technical Features

	<b>Expressive</b>				<b>Connective</b>		<b>Commercial</b>	<b>Co-creative</b>
<i>Affordance</i>	Flexibility of Expression	Scope of Expression		Ephemerality of Expression	Scope of Connection		Monetization Capacity	Collaboration Capacity
		Macro-content	Micro-content		Internal Connections	External Connections		
<i>Outcome</i>	Express concisely or with abundance (e.g. A tweet limited to a maximum of 240 characters)	Manage expressive architecture such as, text, font, sizes, colors, or menus. (e.g. A blog site theme with a specific color and content organization format)	Construct, edit, and display expressive content (e.g. An Instagram post depicting a filtered picture and a text caption)	Manage affect and disclosure by controlling availability (e.g. A sensitive Facebook story that remains visible for 24 hours)	Bridge content within platforms, organizing content (e.g. A Blogger post is given a Label that connects it with other posts associated with the same Label)	Bridge with other platforms Sharing with other platforms (e.g. A Blogger post is shared from Blogger to Facebook)	Monetize content and make commercial partnerships and endorsements visible (e.g. Create and manage Snapchat ads with Ads Manager)	Create joint content, engage with and build on others/ content (e.g. Respond to a TikTok video by creating a TikTok video that plays concurrently with the original in your post)
<i>Technical feature</i>	Twitter - Tweet  TikTok - Post	Blogger - Theme - Layout - Pages	Instagram - Post	Multi-Platform - Story	Blogger - Labels	Blogger - Share	Snapchat - Snap Pixel - Ads Manager  Twitter - Lookalike - Twitter Media Studio	Twitter - Quote Tweet  TikTok - Stitch - Duet