The Impacts of Social Media Deletion on Audience Perception

Tianduo Zhang
University of Miami, zhangtianduo@hotmail.com

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THE IMPACTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA DELETION ON AUDIENCE PERCEPTION

By

Tianduo Zhang

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THE IMPACTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA DELETION ON AUDIENCE PERCEPTION

Tianduo Zhang

Approved:

Don Stacks, Ph.D.
Professor of Public Relations

Michael Beatty, Ph.D.
Professor of Communication Studies

Diane Millette, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Communication Studies

M. Brian Blake, Ph.D.
Dean of the Graduate School
This study looked into the phenomenon of social media deletion: how it happens, what it looks like and how it is perceived. An experiment was conducted comparing the impacts of four different social media deletion scenarios on perceived transparency, homophily and believability. In the survey part, the researcher also collected participant’s self-report information regarding the awareness and conduct of social media deletion, and the interpretation of social media deletion.

The study aimed to find out whether social media deletion matters in organizational public relations effort, and how it influences the opinion of audiences. In addition, the study aimed to find a proper strategy that could guide or social media management on issues related to deletion.

The study found that audiences notice the existence of social media deletion, most of them notice it “occasionally” or “once or twice”, and they intend to associate it with wrong doings or misconducts. Social media deletion negatively impacts audience perception on transparency, homophily and believability of the organization. Meanwhile, repost comment does not have a significant impact audience perception.
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this project to my mother Yulan Li and my father Xi Zhang, without whose support this would never happen. They are loving and caring parents, my smartest and most supportive friends and my very first mentors. They guided me as well as hundreds of their students with their knowledge and spirit of serving others, and humble attitude towards everyone. Moreover, their trust and respect have always been the source of faith for me.

Mom and dad, I love you. You are and you will always be my role models.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

The past decade has witnessed the booming development of social media and social media research literature. Though being a relatively new phenomenon, social media has been explored in various levels and aspects including: the definitions and features of social media, social media utility in crisis communication, political communication, public health (Taha A, Kass-Hout & Hend Alhinnawi, 2013), interpersonal communication, (Al-Deen, Noor., & Hendricks, 2013), organizational communication (Leonardi, Huysman & Steinfield, 2013) and marketing (Paquette, 2013) etc..

Although the definition of social media is still under heated discussion, it is widely accepted that social media is based on Web 2.0 and the key feature of Web 2.0 is user generated information. Since the control of information flow is in user’s hands, they were entitled with the right to build profiles, publish contents, comment and delete content. Previous studies have explored the impacts of many social media behaviors. However, researchers have not yet explored social media deletion, which is a very common phenomenon in social media.

Through conducting an online experiment using Facebook stimuli and collecting self-reported information concerning with social media deletion, this study examined the extent deletion noticed by audiences and how different forms of deletion affect audience’s perception of transparency, homophily and believability with regards to an organization. Research found that people do notice social media deletion: most of the participants notice social media deletion occasionally or once or twice. Social media
deletion will negatively affect perceived transparency, relationship (homophily), and believability regardless of repost comment. Deletion behavior was interpreted as a signal of regret, dishonesty, change of mind and correction of editorial mistakes.

Social media is a simple but barely studied phenomenon. It is conceptualized in the next chapter by conducting a literature review.
Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review addressed four basic questions concerned with the rationality of this study. The first question is what is social media deletion? This part provides an overview of social media deletion. The second is why deletion happens. By summarizing the definitions of social media, the study introduced the technological feature of social media that facilitates deletion. The third is why it needs to be studied. This part examined the importance of social media as a public relations tool. The fourth question is how it could impact public relations. This part proposed the theoretical models that should be used in studying the impact of social media deletion. This chapter concluded by raising three research questions.

Defining Social Media

The concept of social media deletion cannot be understood without knowing the definition of social media. According to Merriam-Webster online, social media is “forms of electronic communication (as Web sites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (as videos)” (Merriam Webster online, 2014). The Oxford English Dictionary defined social media as “Websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking” (OED online, 2014).

Communication researchers have been trying to give more in-depth definitions to social media and even went one step further to classify different types of social media. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) defined social media as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and
that allows the creation and exchange of User generated content” (p. 60). Based on user self-disclosure level and social presence level, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) classified social media into six categories: blogs, social networking sites (SNS), virtual social worlds, collaborative projects, content communities and virtual game worlds. According to this typology, most researched social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter fall into the category of SNS. Sinclaire and Vogus (2011) seemed to share this opinion about the definition of social media.

After review how social media has been defined by researchers and by dictionaries, one can easily determine the essential features of social media: electrical communication community and user generated content. However, these essential features cannot fully address the function of social media. Social media has other features that differentiate from traditional media: interactivity and dynamism, both of which deeply rooted in the technological foundation of social media. Most of the social media allow users to send private or public messages, create topics, comment and share links. Some even allow users to share documents or send emojis (ideograms) etc. Lee, Tisdale and Diddams (2012) addressed that social media has the ability to facilitate multi-directional dialogue. Many researchers in the computer science discipline agreed that social media has a dynamic feature. For instance, McGuire (2012) stated that “social media is dynamic and constantly shifting” (p. 9). Researchers have been working on methods and models to harvest and analyze this dynamic information flow. (Kompatsiaris, Papadopoulos, &
Vakali, 2010; McGuire, 2012; Servi, 2013)

As cited by Hinson (2012), Mark Dykeman had a definition about social media emphasizing this dynamic interactive features, “social media are the means for any person to: publish digital creative content; provide and obtain real-time feedback via online discussions, commentary and evaluations; and incorporate changes or corrections to the original content” (Hinson, 2012, p2). Since social media deletion is closely related to the interactive and dynamic features of social media, Dykeman’s definition of social media will be used throughout this study.

**Social Media in Public Relations**

Social media has dramatically changed the landscape of public relations practices. Wright and Hinson (2006a, 2006b, 2007a, 2007b, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2008d, 2008e, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c, 2009d, 2009e, 2009f & 2010) have conducted annual global trend study examining the impact of social media on public relations. Their report provides a glimpse of how social media influenced public relations in a macro scope. In the fifth year report, Wright and Hinson (2010) stated that there is a constantly growing percentage of PR practitioners who believing new media have changed the way organizations communicate. They also found that, most of the respondents in 2010’s study spent part of their typical day working with some aspects of new media.

Why are the changes important? Some researchers are trying to answer this from a macro perspective. By taking this perspective, researches are following the “structure-
function” logic. Wright and Hinson (2009) discovered that social media impacts the practice of public relations in three aspects: bloggers as “opinion leaders,” instantaneous 24/7 feedback, bypass traditional news media which is traditionally believed to set the public agenda. They also mentioned that social media can bring changes to theories such as spiral of silence theory and excellence theory. The book Social Media: Usage and Impact (Noor Al-Deen & Hendricks, 2011) demonstrated the significant impact of social media on relationship marketing, risk management, health communication, etc.

Not all researchers look at social media in a macro perspective. Many examine social media from micro perspectives, focusing on tactics and practices. These studies were mainly conducted as case studies, experiments and content analysis. For instance, through analyzing the content of social media and news media usage during Dutch Moerdijk crisis, Van der Meer and Verhoeven (2013) found that Twitter had a significant impact on the public framing of the crisis immediately after it happened. After extended media coverage, public framing of the crisis was led by news media and Twitter served mainly as a platform to share information. A crisis communication experiment conducted by Kerkhof and Beugels (2011) on Facebook has found that taking a personal tone instead of a corporate one could result in an increase of conversational human voice, communicated relational commitment and a decrease of negative cognitive responses. Kerkhof and Beugels (2011) also found that apologizing led to higher credibility and a more positive attitude towards the response, but it also increased the perceived
responsibility of the organization for the crisis event.

This study is trying to combine these two perspectives together. The theoretical framework is taking from a macro perspective, asking what will happen when information is withdrawn. The experiment is designed in a micro perspective, exploring the effect of one specific behavior.

**Social Media Deletion: Phenomenon, Practice and Potential Influence**

Social media deletion, as a self-explanatory concept, refers to the withdrawal of existing information from social media. It can take two forms. The first is censorship, which means a social media regulator blocks the content or even disables the user’s account when someone posts information that violates the regulation rules of a social media platform. Such information includes political riots, spam, verbal assault to other users, spreading rumors and harmful information that promote porn, cult or gambling (Sina, 2013). Some literature examined censorship on Chinese social media: according to Tao, David and Adam’s (2013) projection, Chinese social media has a more pro-active strategy that uses the combination of computer generated scan and manual monitor. The second one is user deletion, which means social media users delete their own post for their own purpose. Users are entitled with the right to do so on almost every social media platform. Companies delete their own post when they made improper remarks. Deletion only happens on computer mediated communication. There are two reasons for that: first, deletion activity could only happen on digital media where content does not have a hard
copy. Second, communication is one way and linear on traditional media such as TV, radio and print media. Once content is on the air or in circulation, it is impossible to take it back. But social media facilitates that function.

The two forms of social media deletion were brought together and formed a business in China. “In China individuals or companies often pay money to have controversial negative posts deleted from websites and blogs” (Mozur, 2012, p. 1). A Google search with the key words “post deletion agency” in Chinese turned up 7,560,000 results. These agencies’ services are very similar: to help remove their clients’ unwanted post. Post deletion agencies delete posts in using both deletion forms: using their network from the website to take down information (censorship) and contacting the people who post it and trying to take it down by paying extra money to them. Each piece of deleted information costs from several hundred to hundreds of thousands of RMB. Post deletions practice that abusing the censorship authority is considered illegal in China; however, many major Chinese internet companies are involved in this. In Aug 2012, Baidu, the company owns the largest search engine in China, fired three employees suspected of taking payments to delete contents from its website (Mozur, 2012). In December 2013, Beijing Police busted some “PR” companies who did online information deletion business (Tech.163.com, 2013). Meanwhile, the post deletion business using user generated deletion is in the gray zone. While there is no media coverage on that topic, many key opinion leader including @luoyonghao (5.4 million followers), @labixiaoqiu
(324706 followers) and @kaifuli (51 million followers) on Sina Weibo claimed they were contacted by companies asking them to delete their unfavorable posts.

Unfortunately, while organizations spend large amount of money and even risk the violation of regulation to take their unwanted posts down, the outcome has never been rigidly measured.

As social media enables organizations to by-pass traditional media gate keepers to publish content on its own social media and provided instant feedback, the use of user generated deletion in China should not be an isolated case. There is no communication literature that systematically examines this phenomenon, but traces of corporation performing social media deletion can be found when deleted posts were linked by other posts or cited as information source. For instance, Seward (2011) wrote an article about 10 classical CEO apologies, in which he imbedded 10 YouTube videos. One of the video is British Petroleum (BP)’s CEO Tony Hayward’s public apology on TV which was posted on YouTube by BP after the Gulf oil spilt (Seward, 2011). This apology was criticized by the public. Later BP deleted the post and the video has been marked as “private “when other users trying to retrieve it from the link in Seward’s article.

Intuitively, if the act of social media deletion is considered as a signal in communication, it will not have any impact until this signal is received by the audience. That is to say, audiences have to notice the existence of social media deletion before it could have an impact on audience perception.
Deletion appears differently on various social media platforms. As shown in BP’s example, it is not always marked as “deletion” or “deleted”. This makes deletion not as easily recognized as posting. For instance, on Twitter, if a post is deleted, the post will be removed instantly from the poster’s stream as well as from the reposter’s stream. But there are various situations when audiences could notice the existence of deletion. Traces often emerge when users try to reach the deleted content through a shared link, request more detailed information, or other users have screenshot the deleted post and publicly announce it. The following graphics are used to demonstrate what deletion looks like on different major social media platforms. On Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia, all change history can be tracked in “recent changes”, including deletion. This function allows users to compare among past versions by highlighting the deleted or changed content as shown in Figure 2.1.

**Figure 2.1 Deletion on Wikipedia**

On YouTube, if a video is deleted, it appears as it is in Figure 2.2. On Facebook, if the user is requesting information from a deleted page, a page as Figure 2.3 on mobile device or as Figure 2.4 on website will pop up. Sina Weibo, known as Chinese Twitter, is
China’s largest social media platform. The notification of deletion on Sina Weibo, which is demonstrated in Figure 2.5, is the most obvious among all social media platforms. However, Twitter is an exception in displaying deletion. According to Duffy (2011), deletion on Twitter works as the “recall” function in email. When a post is deleted, it automatically disappears from reposter’s stream.

Figure 2.2 Deletion on YouTube

Figure 2.3 Deletion on Facebook
Figure 2.4 Deletion on Facebook

Figure 2.5 Deletion post on Sina Weibo

Does deletion do any good to organizations? This has not been tested by any communication researcher. In BP’s case, the clip of the apology video has been uploaded by other users and is still available online. What is worse, a user made another video that is very unfavorable towards BP using Hayward’s apology video as source and named it as “A Message from Tony Hayward” (Trainor, 2010). To move beyond isolated case, current study is to systematically test the impact of social media deletion on audience’s perception.
**Social media deletion literature**

As noted earlier, the academic literature of social media deletion is very limited, not only in the number of researches but also in the scope. Previous studies have examined microblog deletion as part of online censorship. Tao et al. (2013) discovered that it only took 5-10 minutes to block sensitive posts on Sina Weibo. Their data gathered from more than 3,500 frequently censored Weibo users over a period of a month shown that censors took down 12 percent of the total posts.

Bamman (2012) conducted a statistical analysis of deleted posts, showing evidence that microblog service provider used geographic monitoring and key words monitoring. The study found the presence of some sensitive terms indicated a higher probability of the deletion of a post and posts from the provinces of Tibet and Qinghai exhibited a higher deletion rate than other provinces.

These are the only published studies available regarding “social media” and “deletion/delete”. Both of the articles are published in computer science journals. The topics of these studies are limited to censorship which only consists of part of the deletion and the discussion is confined to the technological level which only explained the cause while leaving the effect undisussed. This current study will extend the discussion to user generated deletion and discuss it from public relations perspective.
Theoretical Framework

Best Practice in Public Relations Model

The major theoretical frameworks guiding this research is Michaelson and MacLeod’s (2007) Best Practices in Public Relations Model and Stacks’ (2011) Model of Public Relations Impact on Return on Investment (ROI).

As presented in Figure 2.6, in Michaelson and MacLeod’s (2007) Best Practices in Public Relations Model, there are strong ties among the organizational objectives, messages sent by the organization, message received by audiences and audience perception which form a chain that leads to the ultimate outcome of the communication activity. There are mediating factors such as reputation and relationships indirectly affecting the outcome through affecting the performance of each link.

Figure 2.6 Best Practices in Public Relations Model (Michaelson & MacLeod’s 2007, p.13)

Looking through this framework, user generated social media deletion can be
considered as a communication activity initiated for the purpose of image management. This activity might influence the audience perception and their choice if the message is received (in this case means deletion is recognized). Meanwhile, there are mediating factors such as reputation and relationship influencing how people interpret the deletion behavior. From this perspective, in order to determine whether this message creates a valid impact, audience perception should be measured.

**Public Relations Impact on ROI Model**

Stacks’ (2011) went one step further from the best practice model by clarifying the five generalized variables and conceptualizing the relationship between these variables and the organization in a mathematical model. Thus enabled public relations practitioners to calculate public relations’ impact on ROI:

\[
\text{Outcome} = B \pm [\text{Credibility} \pm \text{Relationship} \pm \text{Reputation} \pm \text{Trust}] \pm \text{Confidence} + \text{error}
\]

where B is the starting point (could be the benchmark or baseline) and is influenced by the variables credibility, relationship, reputation, and trust; this is modified by audience confidence within certain amounts of error. (p. 25)

Both Michaelson and MacLeod (2007) and Stacks (2011) argued that public relations effort should be measured and evaluated in order to determine its impacts on the outcome. In both models reputation and relationship are considered as measureable mediating factors that affect the result of communication effort. Their models supported the rationality of measuring audience perception and provided variables to measure. As
stated in Stacks’ book (Stacks, 2011), these variables are “generalized”. The operationalized variables that work for this research will be introduced.

**Operationalized Variables**

**Awareness of social media deletion**

Awareness means the extent that audiences recognize social media deletion. As previously noted, if social media deletion is considered as a signal, it has to be received by audiences so that it can affect their perception. So awareness is the fundamental factor that justifying the rationality of this study.

**Transparency**

Transparency is a concept that is valued in the domain of public relations. Transparency is tied to trust, corporate social responsibility (CSR) and ethics (Rawlings 2008; Rawlins, 2009). It is also considered as a component of reputation. (Fombrun & Rindova, 2000).

In the realm of organizational communication, *Transparency* was defined as the deliberate attempt to make available all legally releasable information—whether positive or negative in nature—in a manner of that is accurate, timely, balanced and unequivocal, for the purpose of enhancing the reasoning ability of publics and holding organizations accountable for their actions, politics, and practices.(Rawlings, 2009, p.45)

Belkin (1999) identified three elements of transparency: informational, participatory and accountability. In an attempt to measure organizational transparency,
Rawlings (2009) developed a model that comprises two traits: transparency reputation which consists of integrity, respect and openness, and transparency efforts which consist of participation substantial information, accountability and secretiveness.

**Homophily**

The concept of homophily is adopted from interpersonal communication where homophily has been defined as “the degree to which pairs of individuals who interact are similar with respect to certain attributes” (Rogers & Bhowmik, 1970, p. 526).

Homophily plays an important role in relational communication. One of the most fundamental principles of human communication is that the information exchange most frequently occurs between a source and a receiver who are alike, similar and homophilous (Rogers & Bhowmik, 1970; Rogers & Shoemaker, 1971).

McCroskey, Richmond and Daly (2006) developed a measurement of homophily in interpersonal communication. In their model, perceived homophily was measured with four dimensions: attitude, mortality (value), appearance and background.

In public relations, homophily occurs in forms of shared values, ideas and beliefs and so far as the person with whom they are interacting. It is a central factor in determining social acceptability of specific organization actions (Michaelson & Stacks, 2011). Michaelson and Stacks (2011) proposed a set of statements that measures
perceived homophily of a product which consists of attitudinal homophily, background homophily and credibility.

**Believability**

Other than transparency and homophily, believability is a simple construct. It is defined as the degree that people believe. Believability has been used by numerous studies concerning with audience perceptions (Jacobson, 1969; Robinson & Kohut, 1988; Austin & Dong, 1994).

Since believability is a simple construct, researchers used various measurements to determine believability in certain research circumstances, which all proven to be highly valid and reliable (Jacobson, 1969; Robinson & Kohut, 1988; Austin & Dong, 1994). In order to measure believability, McCroskey and Richmond (1996) developed a generalized belief measurement which consists of 5 bipolar statements such as “agree/disagree”, “yes/no”, “false/true”.

**Simulation Experiment on Attitudinal Related Research**

It is not surprising that simulation experiment has been so popular in attitudinal related studies given the fact that experiment is the only methodology that can prove sound causal relationship between content and attitude.

Kiousis (2006) used manipulated web page as the stimuli to test the impact of modality on perceptions of credibility of online news. In his research the webpage was manipulated in three modality levels: text only (low level), text and picture (moderate
level) and text, picture and video (high level). He found that the change of content type is not enough to impact the perceived credibility of online news.

Gorn, Jiang and Johar (2008) used mock-up Yahoo! News story to test the impact of babyfaceness on trustworthiness and judgments of a company’s chief executive officer in a public relations crisis. By manipulating the photo of CEO in two different ways (mature/babyface) and putting it into a crisis scenario, researchers found that what might be considered surface characteristics, such as the babyfaceness of a CEO, affect consumer judgments of a CEO’s honesty/innocence and, hence, the credibility of the denial of wrongdoing.

Walther, DeAndrea, Kim and Anthony (2010) used mock-up YouTube page to examine the impact of comments on perceptions of antimarijuana Public Service Announcements (PSA) s. They created mock-up YouTube pages where participants can view the PSAs and the comments. They controlled the comments that appear beneath the video. They found that supportive or derisive comment affects PSA evaluation but does not affect marijuana attitudes while identification and comment valence affects both PSA evaluation and marijuana attitude.

Followed these studies and many others that have not been listed in this article, this study uses manipulated Facebook screenshots as the stimuli to measure how user generated deletion in different scenarios impacts audience perception.
Research Questions

Based on the previous discussion, following research questions were proposed:

RQ I. How often do people notice and conduct social media deletion?

RQ II. How does deletion in different scenarios affect people’s perception of transparency, homophily and believability towards the organization.

RQ III. How do audiences interpret the intention of deletion?

Due to the nature of research questions, the researcher decided to use experiment as the major research methodology. Survey was used as part of the experiment as well as an independent methodology. Content analysis was also used in analyzing the data gathered from the survey. The research methodology will be discussed in detail in next chapter.
Chapter 3

METHOD

Chapter 3 describes the research design in detail: including independent variables (IV) and dependent variables (DV), stimuli, measurements and reliability, and procedures.

Pilot Study

A pilot study has been conducted to determine the IVs and DVs of this research. Students from two undergraduate level classes were recruited as participants (N=47, 14 Chinese students and 33 non-Chinese students). Participants were asked to read a printout of micro blog thread that consists of 15 posts from Sina Weibo. These posts contain both forms of social media deletion including censorship and user deletion. In the thread, each form of deletion was presented in different scenarios including deletion notice with comments, deletion notice without comments, deleted post been snapshot and posted again by other users and repost comment claiming the post have been deleted but actually not. After reading, participants were given the summery of these posts and asked to identify which post involved deletion. The posts that are most recognized as deletion are: deletion with comment, deletion without comment and claimed to have a deletion but not. In current research, these scenarios will be used as independent variables.

Participants were then asked to fill out a survey that measuring the perceived transparency, homophily and generalized belief and research interest regarding every
single post that involved deletion. Data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics to help refine the measurement.

The pilot study also found a high dropout rate. By collecting feedback from participants, the researcher found that reasons for the dropout is long survey and long reading materials, as well as ambiguous statements.

Deliberate efforts have been made to make the experiment material more manageable, while the exploratory feature of this research would be well preserved. First, all items were submitted to an exploratory factor analysis to eliminate items that creates ambiguity and to make the survey more compact. Second, research design has been modified so that participants would not be asked to read pages of posts involving all kinds of social media deletion scenarios. Third, reading materials has been redesigned to eliminate length. Fourth, open ended questions were added to the survey. Fifth, the awareness test was replaced with two self-reporting question on social media deletion awareness and conduct.

**Measurement Instrument**

RQ I asked about how frequent people notice or conduct social media deletion. It was measured though self-reported frequencies of observed social media deletion and social media deletion conduct. Participants were asked “Have you ever noticed someone deleted his/her own post? (Yes, very often/ Yes, occasionally/ Yes, just once or twice/ No, never / I do not remember)” and “Have you ever deleted your own post? (Yes, very often/ Yes, occasionally/ Yes, just once or twice/ No, never / I do not remember)”.
RQ II asked about the impacts of different deletion scenarios on perceived transparency, homophily and believability. The independent variable is deletion scenario. The dependent variables are transparency, homophily, and believability.

Items of Transparency measurement were adopted from Rawling’s (2009) organizational transparency model and have been selected and rewritten for the purpose of this experiment. The reliability alpha of components that makes up Rawling’s transparency model ranges from .78 to .93. Items that were adopted from 5 components of transparency model which were participation (.89) substantiate information (.88), integrity (.89), respect (.88) and openness (.93) which contains items that is irrelevant to this experiment design. After rewriting, a pretest on a group of 47 participants has been conducted. An exploratory factor analysis has been used to test the construct reliability of the measurement. Items that get factor loadings greater than .40 in more than one factor or factor loadings less than .60 in both factors had been eliminated from the measurement. Test indicated that after the rewriting, items loaded on two factors, which were named as transparency reputation (α = .72) and transparency effort (α = .87). Items that went through this step were used in the formal research. Sample statements include “based on the post that I read, I feel All Nippon Airway is Deceptive/Truthful”, “based on the post that I read, I feel All Nippon Airways is committed to do good/Not committed to do good”, “Based on the post that I read, I feel All Nippon Airways makes it easy to find information for people like me”, “Based on the post that I read, I feel All Nippon Airways provides information that is relevant to people like me”.

Homophily was adopted from Michaelson and Stacks’ (2011) homophily measurement. Items have been converted to fit the social media context. Sample
statements are: “This post is something that I would write,” “I would repost these Weibos because they reflect my ideas,” “People who post or repost these Weibos probably think like me,” “This post could be written by any one in my social class”, “I think these posts are reliable,” “I agree with these posts,” “In these posts, facts are presented honestly” and “I find these posts are pleasant.” “I think this post is reliable” “In the post facts are presented honestly” and “This post is very good”.

Believability was measured with McCroskey’s (1999) generalized belief/likableness measurement which is a uni-dimention bipolar scale that consists of 5 items. Participants were asked to indicate their general feelings towards the author of the post by choosing “agree/disagree”, “false/true”, “incorrect/correct”, “wrong/right”, and “yes/no”. The result has been coded in 1 to 5 points with higher score indicating better generalized believability and likableness. The reliability of general believability scale is .95 (McCroskey, 1999).

Due to the exploratory nature of this study, the interpretation of social media deletion was measured in a qualitative approach. Participants were asked to briefly describe their feeling about social media deletion in one or two sentences. The results were submitted to a content analysis. Since there is no previous study from which categories can be derived, the researcher allows categories to emerge from actual data collected. This approach will provide a diversity of participant’s unique attitudes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) thus serve the exploratory nature of the study.

Demographic information including age, academic classification and social media usage information were collected. The full list of measurement can be found in Appendix A.
Stimuli

Four Facebook stimuli were created by saving a screenshot of a Facebook page and editing the posts with Adobe Photoshop. The post was an All Nippon Airways (ANA) apology on Facebook. The content was based on All Nippon Airways real PR crisis in early 2014. The airline launched an advertisement which was immediately criticized as “racism towards the white”. ANA apologized on its Facebook page (Yahoo.News, 2014). However, the apology post disappeared from its time line after a week indicating that it had been deleted. By using a real world case in this experiment, the researcher is trying to create a post that simulates the reality. Each screenshot contained one post that reflects the independent variable and one irrelevant post that makes the page look real. The repost comments in Group 1 and Group 2 were identical. The independent variable was deletion scenario. Group 1 is the control group. Reading material for different groups is listed in Table 3.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Reading Material</th>
<th>Scenario Simulated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group 1: Control Group</td>
<td>Complete post and comments that does not involve any deletion.</td>
<td>No deletion happened.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2: Deletion with comments</td>
<td>Post is converted from Group 1 by replacing the original post with deletion notice.</td>
<td>The user posted something on social media and deletes it after got some comment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3: Deletion without comments</td>
<td>Posts are converted from Group 1 by replacing the original post with deletion notice and wipe out all comments.</td>
<td>The user posted something on social media and deletes it before got some comment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 4: Claimed to be deletion</td>
<td>Post is converted from Group 1 by adding a comment saying that original post will be deleted soon.</td>
<td>The user posted something on social media and got comment saying that it will soon be deleted.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1 Social Media Deletion Scenarios

The stimuli and questionnaires used in the study are presented in Appendix A.
Procedures

Data was collected over three weeks using the online survey tool Qualtrics. Participants were given the link to access to the survey anonymously. Participants were asked to confirm that they are above 18 years old and speak English. At the beginning of the experiment, each participant was randomly directed to one of the four reading materials. When finished reading, participants can click advance to a questionnaire where they were asked to complete measurements of dependent variables and demographic measurements. Participants were not informed that this study was concerning with social media deletion. Instead, they were told this study was about social media strategy.

A total of 138 responses were collected. Thirty nine responses that were either severely incomplete (missing more than half of the question) or did not meet the age and language requirement were dropped which resulting in a final sample of N=99.
Chapter 4

RESULTS

Data were input and processed using the IBM SPSS Statistics 21.0 statistical program. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to answer the research questions.

Participants

Participants were 99 volunteers recruited through posting on Facebook, Sina Weibo and mass email. Ninety-eight participants (M=38, F=60) completed demographic data. All of them were social media users. The average age is 24.7 (SD=5.49) ranging from 18 to 51. Participants are from various countries and regions. See Table 4.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>38.38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60.61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean =24.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD =6.49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>42.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panama</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1 Demographics
Psychometrics

Since the items adopted from previous studies were rewritten for this research, psychometrics test has been conducted to test the validity and reliability of the measurement scales. Items measuring each variable were submitted to an exploratory factor analysis. The items get a primary loading above .60 and no secondary loading above .40 were adopted. Then all reverted items have been recoded. Reliabilities were tested using Cronbach’s alpha.

The result of EFA in transparency measurement indicated that after the rewriting, items were measuring two factors of transparency. Factor one was labeled as transparency reputation which consists of 6 items; factor two was labeled as transparency effort which consists of 5 items. Each statement and the corresponding factor loading were presented in Table 4.2. Primary loadings have been bolded. The reliability of both components in transparency is above .90.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Factor Loadings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Based on the post that I read, I feel All Nippon Airways is-Reliable: Unreliable</td>
<td>Transparency Reputation*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on the post that I read, I feel All Nippon Airways is-Sincere: insincere</td>
<td>Transparency Effort**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on the post that I read, I feel All Nippon Airways is-Disclosing: Concealing</td>
<td>Transparency Effort**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on the post that I read, I feel All Nippon Airways is-Committed to do good: Not Committed to do good</td>
<td>Transparency Effort**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on the post that I read, I feel All Nippon Airways is-Open: Closed</td>
<td>Transparency Effort**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on the post that I read, I feel All Nippon Airways is-Willing to listen: Unwilling to listen</td>
<td>Transparency Effort**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based on the post that I read, I feel All Nippon Airways makes it easy to find information for people like me.

Based on the post that I read, I feel All Nippon Airways provides information that is reliable.

Based on the post that I read, I feel All Nippon Airways provides information that is relevant to people like me.

Based on the post that I read, I feel All Nippon Airways provides information that is complete.

Based on the post that I read, I feel All Nippon Airways is Deceptive: Truthful

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Component</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I would re-post this post because it reflects my ideas.</td>
<td>.868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would post this post because it reflects how my friends think.</td>
<td>.839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This post is something that I would write.</td>
<td>.830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This post is something my friends would write.</td>
<td>.813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People who post like this are culturally similar to me.</td>
<td>.731</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Reliability Transparency Reliability $\alpha = .91$

**Transparency Effort Reliability $\alpha = .90$

Table 4.2 Transparency Measurement Overview

Items in homophily measurement were measuring two factors which were labeled as *attitudinal homophily* and *ethical homophily*. Three items have been discarded for having factor loadings above .40 on both factors. The discarded items were: “people who post or repost probably think like me”, “I agree with this post” and “this post is very good”. Items kept in the measurement were presented in table 4.3 with primary loadings bolded. The reliability alpha of both components of homophily measurement is above .70.
In this post, facts are presented honestly. | .278 | .742
I think this post is reliable. | .389 | .738
This post could be written by any one in my social class. | -.101 | .716
This post will be re-posted by people in my social economic class. | .372 | .631

*Attitude Homophily Reliability $\alpha = .90$

**Background Homophily Reliability $\alpha = .74$

Table 4.3 Homophily Measurement Overview

The EFA result of believability measurement indicated that the measurement has only one dimension. The reliability alpha of believability measurement is .93.

Data Analyses

Research Question I

RQ I asked about how often people notice and conduct social media deletion. The results showed that participants have noticed social media deletion in everyday life. Only seven participants reported that they did not remember. As presented in Table 4.4, 15.38% participants indicated that they noticed social media deletion very often, 52.75% did it occasionally, 26.37% did it just once or twice and 5.49% percent of people never noticed social media deletion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have you ever noticed someone deleted his/her social media post?</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes, very often.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15.38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes, occasionally.</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>52.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes, just once or twice.</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26.37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No, never</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 91, $X^2$ (df = 3) = 45.31, p < .0001

Table 4.4 Social Media Deletion Awareness
Pearson’s Chi Square test has been used to determine the statistical differences between groups. The relationship was probed as “No, never” < “Yes, very often” = “Yes, just once or twice” < “Yes, occasionally”, meaning: the number of participants who never noticed social media deletion is significantly lower than the number of participants who did it very often ($X^2 = 4.263, df = 1, p < .039$); there was no difference between number of participants who noticed social media deletion very often and the number of participants did it just once or twice ($X^2 = 2.632, df = 1, p > .104$); there were significantly more participants noticed social media deletion occasionally than noticed social media deletion just once or twice or very often ($X^2 = 18.645, df = 1, p < 0.0001$).

When viewing all participants who noticed social media deletion altogether, researchers found that there were significantly more participants have noticed social media deletion than those who never did.

When asked about their own deletion conduct, two participants reported that they do not remember. Results demonstrated that deletion conduct was common among users. As presented in Table 4.5, a cumulative of 46% of the participants indicated that they delete their own post occasionally or very often, while only 8% of participants noted that they never conduct social media deletion at all.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have you ever deleted your own social media post?</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, very often.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, occasionally.</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, just once or twice.</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, never.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 98, $X^2$ (df = 3), p < .0001*

Table 4.5 Social media deletion conduct
Results probed a relationship like “No, never” = “Yes, very often” < “Yes, just once or twice” = “Yes, occasionally”, indicating there was no difference between the number of participants who never noticed social media deletion and the number of participants who noticed it very often ($X^2 = 0$, df = 1, p = 1). Neither was there a difference between the number of participants who noticed social media deletion occasionally and the number of participants who noticed it just once or twice ($X^2 = 0.450$, df = 1, p > .502). However, the number of participants who noticed social media deletion occasionally or just once or twice is significantly higher than the number of participants who noticed it very often or never ($X^2 = 18.689$, df = 1, p < 0.001).

**Research Question II**

RQ II asked about the impact of social media deletion on transparency, homophily, and believability in different scenarios. One-way ANOVA test was conducted with deletion scenario being the independent variable and perceived transparency reputation, transparency effort, attitudinal homophily, ethical homophily and believability being the dependent variables. The result of one-way ANOVA can be found in Table 4.6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transparency Reputation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>18.560</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.187</td>
<td>4.977</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>118.080</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>1.243</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>136.640</td>
<td>98</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transparency Effort</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>4.789</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.596</td>
<td>2.816</td>
<td>.043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>53.857</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>.567</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58.645</td>
<td>98</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitudinal Homophily</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>5.116</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.705</td>
<td>2.404</td>
<td>.072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>67.385</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>.709</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>72.500</td>
<td>98</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethical Homophily</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>5.665</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.888</td>
<td>4.283</td>
<td>.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>41.882</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>.441</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>47.547</td>
<td>98</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Believability | Between Groups | 19.417 | 3 | 6.472 | 6.201 | .001
| Within Groups | 99.155 | 95 | 1.044 |
| Total          | 118.573 | 98 |

Table 4.6 One way ANOVA

Results found the existence of social media deletion significantly impacted the perceived transparency reputation, transparency effort, ethical homophily and believability. However, it did not affect the perception of attitudinal homophily.

**Post Hoc analyses**

Post-Hoc tests were introduced to identify differences among groups. The mean and standards deviation of different groups regarding each variable is listed in Table 4.7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Deletion scenario</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transparency Reputation</td>
<td>No deletion</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4.870</td>
<td>1.041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deleted post with repost comment</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3.897</td>
<td>1.031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deleted post without repost</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3.889</td>
<td>1.206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No deletion but repost comment claim a deletion will occur</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4.542</td>
<td>1.182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency Effort</td>
<td>No deletion</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4.296</td>
<td>1.114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deleted post with repost comment</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3.304</td>
<td>0.958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deleted post without repost</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3.419</td>
<td>1.255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No deletion but repost comment claim a deletion will occur</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.890</td>
<td>1.175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudinal Homophily</td>
<td>No deletion</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2.719</td>
<td>0.994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deleted post with repost comment</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2.440</td>
<td>0.640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deleted post without repost</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2.126</td>
<td>0.775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No deletion but repost comment claim a deletion will occur</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.580</td>
<td>1.041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Homophily</td>
<td>No deletion</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3.333</td>
<td>1.031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deleted post with repost comment</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2.780</td>
<td>1.206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deleted post without repost</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2.806</td>
<td>1.182</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.7 Descriptive statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Believability</th>
<th>No deletion but repost comment claim a deletion will occur</th>
<th>20</th>
<th>3.150</th>
<th>1.114</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No deletion</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3.326</td>
<td>0.958</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deleted post with repost comment</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4.312</td>
<td>1.255</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deleted post without repost</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4.259</td>
<td>1.175</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No deletion but repost comment claim a deletion will occur</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.520</td>
<td>0.994</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Transparency reputation. Post-Hoc indicated that perceived transparency reputation of participants reading the deleted post with repost comments (Group 2, M=3.897, SD = 1.03104) and deleted post without repost comments (Group 3, M= 3.889, SD = 1.20629) is significantly lower than participants reading the post with no deletion (Group 1, M= 4.870, SD = 1.04118), (pgroup1v2 = .024, pgroup1v3 = .019). The perceived transparency was not affected by the comment claiming the poster will delete the post soon (Group 4), M=4.542, pgroup1v4 = .802. Neither did repost comment affect the perception of transparency in scenarios where deletion took place, group 2v3 = 1.000. Post deletion negatively impacted perceived transparency reputation regardless of the existence of repost comments.

Transparency effort. Results demonstrated that perceived transparency effort of participants reading the deleted post with repost comment (Group 2, M= 3.304, SD = .957) and the deleted post without repost comment (Group 3, M= 3.418, SD = 1.254) is significantly lower than participants who read the post which was not involved in deletion (Group 1, M= 4.296, SD = 1.114), (pgroup1v2 = .021, pgroup1v3 = .046). The perceived transparency was not affected by the repost comment claiming the poster will delete the post soon (Group 4, M=3.890, pgroup1v4 = .680). Neither did repost comment affect the perception of transparency effort in scenarios where deletion took place.
Post deletion negatively impacted perceived transparency effort regardless of the existence repost comments.

In summary, when post deletion took place, it negatively impacted on both factors of perceived transparency. In the meantime, repost comments did not impact perceived transparency.

*Attitudinal Homophily.* Post deletion does not impact perceived attitudinal homophily in any of the tested scenarios.

*Ethical Homophily.* Post-Hoc results demonstrated that perceived ethical homophily of participants who reads deleted post with repost comments (Group 2) (M=2.780, SD = .551), and deleted post without repost comments (Group 3) (M= 2.805, SD = .697), is significant lower than participants reading posts with no deletion (Group 1) (M=3.333, SD = .600, \( p_{\text{group1v2}} = .034 \), \( p_{\text{group1v3}} = .042 \)). The perceived transparency was not affected by the comment claiming the poster will delete the post soon (Group 4) (M=3.150, SD = .812, \( p_{\text{group1v4}} = .831 \)). Neither did the repost comment affect the perception of ethical homophily in scenarios where deletion took place (\( p_{\text{group2v3}} = .999 \)). Post deletion impacted perceived ethical homophily negatively regardless of the existence of repost comments.

For homophily, post deletion did not impact perceived attitudinal homophily, but it impacted negatively on ethical homophily. In the meantime, repost comments did not impact audiences’ perception of homophily.

*Believability.* Deletion affected believability (\( F = 6.201, p = .001 \)). Perceived believability of participants reading the deleted post with repost comments (Group 2, M=3.688, SD = 0.766), and the deleted post without repost comments (Group 3, M= 3.742,
SD = 1.075) is lower than participants reading the post with no deletion (Group 1, M= 4.674, SD = 1.003, p_{group1v2} = .010, p_{group1v3} = .013). The perceived believability was not affected by repost comments. (Group 4), (M= 4.480, SD = 1.232, p_{group1v4} = .937, p_{group2v3} = .998).

To sum up, post deletion has negative impact on perceived transparency, credibility and believability. However, study did not find repost comments have any impact on the dependent variables.

**Research Question III**

RQ III asked about people’s interpretation of social media deletion. Eighty one effective responses were collected. By analyzing the content of the responses, seven categories emerged. The first one is “do not care” or “no big deal”. Eleven participants indicated that they do not care about social media deletion. The second category is “depends on circumstances”. Seven participants mentioned that their feeling towards social media deletion was depend on circumstances or listed several possible circumstances. The third category is “personal decision change”. About 15 participants mentioned that deletion might be a result of personal decision change due to privacy considerations, mood or changed mind. The forth category is called “wrong doing”. Responses in this category ties social media deletion with dishonesty, unreliable, regret of wrong doing, or being deceptive. About 21 responses fit into this category. Fourteen participants interpret social media deletion as “lack of consideration”. Compare with “wrongdoing”, “lack of consideration” tends to see deletion conduct as more unplanned. Key words mentioned in this category were “stupid”, “drunk”, “careless” or “needs more consideration”. Eight participants interpret social media deletion as editorial decision for
the sake of eliminating informational mistakes, correcting spelling or wording. Five participants thought deletion was influenced by others, possible reasons mentioned including hacking and negative feedbacks. The result is found in Figure 4.1. Coding book found in Appendix B

![Figure 4.1 Interpretation of Deletion Intention](image)

Again, Pearson’s Chi Square was used to compare the differences among groups. The distribution of participants was uneven ($X^2 = 17.37$, df=6, p = .008). The expected frequency is 11.71. The numbers of participants that felt social media deletion was influenced by others or was for editorial mistakes were significantly smaller than the expected frequency. Meanwhile, the numbers of participants who interpreted social media deletion as lack of consideration, personal decision change, circumstance depending issue or irrelevance corresponded to expected frequency. The number of participants indicating social media deletion as a sign of wrong doing is greater than the expected frequency.

**Additional Post Hoc Analyses**

As noted in the literature review, the social media deletion business in China has attracted numerous media coverage locally and internationally. Scholars were also aware
of the common existence of social media censorship in China. A Google search with the key words “post deletion business” in Chinese returned about 3,000,000 results, while a search with the same phrase in English only returned about 1,780 results that were all associated with China. This suggested that Chinese audiences were more likely to be educated (by media) about the existence of social media deletion. In the pilot study, the researcher found that Chinese audiences and non-Chinese audiences held different opinions about some of the items. However, the sample size of pilot study was too small to draw a conclusion. So in the formal study, the researcher conducted a t-test to see if Chinese participants perceive deletion differently from non-Chinese participants. It is worth noticing that the distinction between Chinese and non-Chinese participants were not merely cultural or ethnical. The two groups were different in their knowledge of social media deletion.

Results found that in the scenarios where no deletion happened, Chinese participants showed a lower level of perceived ethical homophily than non-Chinese participants (Mean Difference = -.567, p = .018). In the scenario of “deleted post with repost comment”, Chinese participants presented a lower level of perceived transparency reputation than non-Chinese participants (MD = -.881, p = .036). In the scenario of “post deletion without repose comment”, Chinese participants presented a higher level of attitudinal homophily than non-Chinese participants (MD = .911, p = .002). The result of t-test can be found in Table 4.8.
Table 4.8 Differences between Chinese and non-Chinese participants

The researcher was also interested in knowing whether demographic differences such as gender will affect the perception of deletion strategy.

Result found that gender difference only emerges in the scenario when a post has been deleted and no repost comment was presented. Female participants were more inclined to believe the organization than male participants (MD = 1.174, p = .003).

In summary, Chinese and non-Chinese or gender did affect some factors of the perception of social media deletion.
Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

This chapter first provides an overall summary of the study, then discusses the limitations and future research. The chapter concludes with research findings and implications.

The purpose of this study was to explore the phenomenon of social media deletion in a broad sense: how it exists, why it is important and how it might be used. Three questions were asked to this regard. RQ I. How often do people notice or conduct social media deletion? RQ II. How deletion in different scenarios affect people’s perception of transparency, homophily and believability toward the organization? RQ III. How audiences interpret the intention of deletion?

The researcher conducted an online experiment using Facebook stimuli to test how audiences’ perceived transparency, homophily and believability vary in different social media deletion scenarios. Participants were asked to answer questions regarding their awareness of social media deletion and interpretation of social media deletion in their real lives.

Limitations and Future Research

First, in the experiment design, the post from only one organization was used and the post is based on a real world case. Although the reading material used in the experiment had covered all information needed to complete the survey questionnaires, a single real world case might still increase the chances of random error caused by participants’ knowledge background or biases. Future research should consider using
multiple posts from different organizations, or even a mixture of individual posts and
organizational posts.

Second, the stimuli used in the experiment were not fully functional social media
pages but screenshots. This limited the variables that can be measured from this study.
Future studies should consider using an interactive stimuli social media page so that some
factors such as participation, respect and future research interest can be measured.

Third, due to the exploratory nature of this study and the limitation of experiment
design, the transparency measurement has been highly compact. Future research should
consider using the entire organizational transparency model that Rawlings (2009)
developed.

On the practical level, future research should extend the study to other social
media platforms such as YouTube, Twitter, or Linked-In in order to provide a more
comprehensive understanding of social media deletion. Thus it will help understand
whether organizations should apply different social media deletion strategies on different
social media platforms. A longitudinal study on social media deletion is necessary
because it would demonstrate the long-term impact of social media deletion strategy.
This will provide insights to organization’s policy on social media management, such as
what can be deleted and what not. Since the audience perception probably will not be
solely determined by social media deletion, when studying the strategy, researchers
should also examine possible covariance that might influence the impact of social media
deletion. Last but not least, researchers should look beyond perceptions to explore the
behavioral influence of social media deletion, such as the impact of social media deletion
on interactions, endorsement behavior and purchasing behavior.
On the theoretical level, researchers could better conceptualize deletion. The first question that needs to be answered is whether deletion happens only on social media or it is a phenomenon on all computer mediated communications. Future research should explore the mechanism of how deletion affects audience perception. For instance, does deletion create a new form of cognitive dissonance or increase the uncertainty level? Researchers should also look into the impact of deletion, such as its impacts on the formation of collective memories. Deletion could also expand the use of agenda setting theory. Instead of setting the media agenda, there might be a possibility to withdraw something from the agenda.

Findings and Implications

To answer the first research question, the study found that social media deletion is very common and often noticed by audiences. Fourteen percent of participants indicated that they noticed deletion very often; 49% participants noticed deletion occasionally, 24% noticed deletion just once or twice. The majority of participants noticed social media deletion occasionally or did it once or twice. There were equal amount of participants who noticed social media deletion very often and who never noticed it, but this makes a relatively small proportion. Deletion conduct is common among participants as well. Most of the participants (84%) conducted social media deletion occasionally or once or twice.

On one hand, this result partly justified the rationale of social media deletion research. Since the deletion conduct is very common, the knowledge of this phenomenon might impact a large group of social media users. On the other hand, it revealed a problem: deletion might not work as it was supposed to work. Unlike posting, which has
multiple functions based on content, deletion only has one function, which is to remove the post from public attention. It might not be worth doing when many people have already noticed the deletion, because once noticed, deletion has failed to serve its purpose.

Another problem that stems from the result of research question one is about the effectiveness of social media posts as a sampling pool of public opinion. There are numerous studies using social media as sampling pools in studying public opinions, many of which are case studies. If the post deletion is so common that it reached the extent that it would affect the result of observed public opinion, it should become a consideration in the sampling process. Large sample quantitative research is needed in order to determine to what extent of social media deletion impacts the landscape observed public opinion. There might be a window period for sampling within which the social media posts truly representative the public opinion towards certain issue.

The second research question asked about how social media impacts audience perception. Results found that in the scenarios where social media deletion took place, regardless of the presence of repost comment, the perceived transparency, homophily and believability were significantly lower than in the scenarios where there was no deletion. Repost comments did not significantly impact perceived attitudinal homophily. In none of scenarios was the presence of repost comment a significant influencing factor of audience perception.

This result, again, was twofold. First, it proved that this commonly existing phenomenon is harmful, which also rationalized the research on social media deletion. Second, it shed light on the fact that although social media facilitate multi way
communication, in the case of social media deletion, the perceived image is still determined by the act of the poster, not the commentator. That means social media users should try their best to avoid social media deletion, but they need not be too anxious about negative repost comments criticizing them for deletion.

However, this finding about the impact of repost comments is contradictory to what has been found in previous study (Walther, 2010) discovered that comments significantly affect the evaluation of antimarijuana PSAs. There are two potential explanations for this: first, the variables measured are different because the current study is interested in the audience’s perception towards the poster, which was the organization, while Walther’s study is intended to look into audience’s perception towards the content. Second, social media deletion is a very simple and straight forward signal that audiences might form an impression instantly even before noticing other user’s comments. One or both of the reasons might contribute to the differences between current study and previous ones.

In an attempt to answer the third research question, a qualitative study indicated that participants interpret the intention of social media deletion as personal decision change, wrong doings, lack of consideration, correction of editorial mistakes and influence by others. A small percentage of participants tend to not care about the intention of social media deletion or see it as case-by-case. Among all these interpretations, the interpretation that associated social media deletion with wrong doing was the most popular one.

This result indicated that although social media deletion has never been studied as a strategy, it is strategic in audiences’ eyes. The majority of the participants see social
media deletion as strategic conduct which serves the needs of concealing wrong doing, minimizing negative impact or protecting privacy. The responses that the researcher collected from audiences were not favorable towards deletion. However, none of the participants indicated that deletion could lead to a crisis. In a situation when improper the post could provoke much worse audience perceptions or escalate to a crisis. The negative impact brought by social media deletion is preferred. The result of this study did not reveal whether the audience’s interpretation corresponds to the purpose of deletion conduct. Further study should look into it, because there might be a discrepancy between the poster’s intention and the audience perception.

Some participants indicated that whether deletion was conducted by a corporation or by individual would affect their interpretations. Deletion conducted by a personal account was more likely to be linked to personal decision while deletion conducted by a corporation account tended to be seen as dishonesty or hiding truth. Some participants indicated that if a post similar to the deleted post was posted afterwards, the deletion conduct could be considered as an editorial correction or update of information. Some participants also noted that the frequency of deletion will impact their interpretation of social media deletion. Frequent social media deletion will be considered as a sign of “lack of credibility”.

When combing the results of the first and the third research questions, there is an interesting finding: audiences have double standards for individuals and organizations. While many participants admitted they deleted their own posts occasionally, they did not seem to have the same level of tolerance towards organizations. This touches a problem that widely exists in PR industry: many organizational accounts were run by interns,
because they are young social media users and supposed to know more the right way to run it. In fact, their personal social media experience might not work in some circumstances in managing an organizational account. Personal account deletion might not be a very big deal. However, in organizational account, deletion is and will be seen as strategic.

Though not statistically proven, responses in the third research question suggested that social media deletion can not only be noted but also could be memorized thus creating a cumulative effect on audience confidence toward the organization. Organizations should be more careful about this cumulative effect when they decide to delete their social media posts.

This study is the first to examine deletion from public relations perspective. Implications from this research can be used directly in PR practices and research.

First, social media deletion is not a good way to handle improper posts. Although deletion notice is not as obvious as posting, audiences do notice the existence of deletion, and they most often interpreted it as wrong doings. Some audiences even memorize the frequency for one to conduct deletion and this affects the audience’s confidence towards the poster.

Second, social media deletion is worth studying in the future because it is a phenomenon that widely exists and has an impact on the communication and relationship building process.

Third, due to the large scale of social media deletion, it might become a sampling consideration for studies using social media posts as the source to study current issues.
Fourth, organizations should be fully aware of the risk of social media deletion because it probably has a negative impact on the overall ROI of the communication effort. As noted in the literature review, according to Stacks’ (2011) model, the outcome of communication effort is determined by the credibility, relationship, reputation, trust and confidence which can be presented as: \[ \text{Outcome} = B \pm [\text{Credibility} \pm \text{Relationship} \pm \text{Reputation} \pm \text{Trust}] \pm \text{Confidence} + \text{error}. \]

This study has proven that social media deletion has a negative impact on transparency which is associated with reputation and trust, homophily which is an indicator of relationship, and believability which is associated with credibility. It also suggested cumulative social media deletion might negatively impact confidence. It is reasonable to draw an implication that social media deletion will produce a negative communication outcome from the baseline.

Finally, though the best strategy is to avoid deletion, in some circumstances, such as preventing a potential crisis, the negative impact can be outweighed. This study also provided insights that could help eliminate the negative impact when an improper or erroneous post has been made. Instead of a simple deletion, a deletion followed by an updated post on the issue might be a better solution. After conducting a deletion, practitioners should be more cautious on future postings and avoid constant deletions.


Sina. (2013). Sina Weibo Community Management Regulations (Trail Version) http://service.account.weibo.com/roles/guiding 2013.05.08


Appendix-A Experiment materials

You are being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of social media strategy on audience perception. During the study, you will be asked to read a social media screen-shot and complete a survey that measures your attitude towards the organization mentioned in what you have read. Then you will be asked to provide information such as age, gender and social media usage habits. The survey will takes you about 5-10 min to finish. No risks or direct benefits are expected. Information collected in this survey will not be identified. All information is anonymous. Only the researcher has access to it. Participation is voluntary. You are free to refuse to participate in the study or withdraw from this research at any time during the study with consequence.

By participating in this research, you agree to the following facts: you are above 18 years old; you have read the purpose of this research; you agree to participate knowing that you can withdraw from this research at any time. Professor Don Stacks (don.stacks@miami.edu) will answer any questions you may have concerning the purpose, procedures, and outcome of this project. If you have questions about your rights as a research subject you may contact Human Subjects Research Office at the University of Miami, at (305) 243-3195 or hsro@med.maimi.edu. Your response to every question will determine the data quality of this research. Thank you for your time!
Are you over 18 years old and speak English?

☑ Yes (1)

☑ No (2)

(If “No” is selected, the survey automatically skip to the end.)
Please read this screen-shot carefully, you will be asked to answer questions based on the post. (One of the pictures will randomly appear)

Figure A-1 No deletion (Group 1-Control Group)
Figure A-2  Deleted post with repost comment (Group 2)
From late January to mid March, large ice floes form in the Sea of Okhotsk near Hokkaido, northern Japan. ANA operates 1 flight to/from Okhotsk Monbetsu, and 2 flights to/from Menhubetsu daily.

http://www.ana.co.jp/aswws/us/e/?cid=SNSGL25_201402

Figure A-3  Deleted post that has not been reposted (Group 3)
Based on the post that I read, I feel All Nippon Airways is:

| Deceptive | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | Truthful | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Committed to do good | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | Not Committed to do good | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Reliable | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | Unreliable | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Sincere | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | Insincere | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
Based on the post that I read, I feel All Nippon Airways

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>makes it easy to find information for people like me.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>provides information that is relevant to people like me.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>provides information that is reliable.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>provides information that is complete.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please indicate your attitude towards the All Nippon Airways' post using Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Agree and Strongly Agree.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I would re-post this post because it reflects my ideas.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would post this post because it reflects how my friends think.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This post is something</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that I would write.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This post is very good.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This post is something my friends would write.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People who post or re-post this post probably think like me.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People who post like this are culturally similar to me.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I agree with this post.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think this post is reliable.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In this post, facts are presented honestly.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This post could be written by any one in my social class.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This post will be re-posted by people in my social economic class.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please indicate your general feeling towards the author of the post.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feeling</th>
<th><strong>:</strong>:<strong>:</strong>:<strong>:</strong>:__</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td><strong>:</strong>:<strong>:</strong>:<strong>:</strong>:__</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False</td>
<td><strong>:</strong>:<strong>:</strong>:<strong>:</strong>:__</td>
<td>True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorrect</td>
<td><strong>:</strong>:<strong>:</strong>:<strong>:</strong>:__</td>
<td>Correct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrong</td>
<td><strong>:</strong>:<strong>:</strong>:<strong>:</strong>:__</td>
<td>Right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td><strong>:</strong>:<strong>:</strong>:<strong>:</strong>:__</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What is your gender?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)

What year were you born?

____________________

What is your nationality?

____________________

What is the highest level of education that you have completed or working on?

- Less than high school (1)
- High school/GED (2)
- 2-year college degree (3)
- 4-year college degree (4)
- Master’s degree (5)
- Doctoral degree (6)
- Some college (7)

Which of the following social media tools do you use regularly? (Check all that apply)

- Facebook (1)
- Twitter (2)
- Google+ (3)
- YouTube (4)
- LinkedIn (5)
- Instagram (6)
- Flickr (7)
Pinterest (8)

Wechat (9)

Other (10) ____________________

How much time you spend on social media every week?

- < 1 h (1)
- 1h~3 h (2)
- 3h~6h (3)
- 6h~9h (4)
- >9h (5)

Have you ever deleted your own social media post?

- Yes, very often. (1)
- Yes, occasionally. (2)
- Yes, just once or twice. (3)
- No, never. (4)
- I do not remember. (5)

Have you ever noticed someone deleted his/her social media post?

- Yes, very often. (1)
- Yes, occasionally. (2)
- Yes, just once or twice. (3)
- No, never (4)
- I do not remember. (5)

What do you think if you found someone deleted his/her own post? Please indicate in one brief sentence. __________________________________________________________
## Appendix-B Coding Book of Audience Interpretation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpretation</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Do not care                    | Responses showing apathy towards social media deletion or no specific opinion fit into this category. | 1. I don't have an opinion. The deletion of a post could mean anything.  
2. I don't care  
3. nothing  
4. feel not relevant after a while  
5. Doesn’t bother me at all...  
6. Don't care, it's their business.  
7. I usually don't think much of it unless it was a really offensive or outrageous post to begin with.  
9. No big deal  
10. I don't really think much of it, I tend not to care  
11. Eh |
| Depends on circumstances       | Responses indicating the interpretation is depend on circumstances or listing possible circumstances as examples, but not giving a definitive opinion to any of listed interpretations falls into this category. | 1. Depends on the circumstances.  
2. He/She might think the post is incorrect information, or he/ she wants to hide privacy information, or even avoids conflicts online. However, for the organization, if private company often delete their post, it may ruin the credibility of itself, while considering this depends on the frequency it delete its post.  
3. Gotta be some reason that he deleted his stuff  
4. depends  
5. I wonder why they deleted it  
6. I would wonder why they deleted the post  
7. If you see a similar post later, that means they just made a mistake when posting it. If you don’t see it any more, that means they regret posting it and they don’t want people to know about it anymore. |
| Personal decision Change       | Responses indication social media deletion might be due to personal reasons caused by bad mood, privacy considerations. | 1. He/She changed his/her mind.  
2. It might relevant to the private issue or something he didn't want to be recorded.  
3. They don't want share the information any more.  
4. They change their mind on that issue or they do not show something to the |
5. They realize that they posted something that they should not have shared with the world. This happens.
6. They don't want the information to be online anymore.
7. I would think that they changed their mind.
8. It is understandable because people may change their minds when they find out it is inappropriate to disclose certain information.
9. Something improper as to be seen by the public.
10. They changed their minds.
11. He/she changes mind quickly.
12. Wrong doing.
13. Responses indication social media deletion is a sign of wrong doing, regret or being deceptive.

1. They just regret for what they've already said.
2. They had something to hide.
3. I have made mistakes, other people do as well it is fine to delete.
4. I think it's suspicious and reflects poorly on the person.
5. Maybe he fill his post was wrong.
6. He or she is regretted about what has been posted.
7. He/she found that she was wrong, or that post triggered unexpected reaction.
8. They probably regretted posting it or didn't want others to see the post anymore.
9. If it is a company I would feel they are hiding something.
11. It happens. It's acceptable. But if a business entity does this, it could be considered as not disclosing the whole truth and sometimes not reliable to the audience.
12. I might assume they had posted something incorrect, inaccurate, or possibly offensive and deleted it to avoid
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lack of consideration</th>
<th>Responses indication people conduct social media deletion because they were lack of consideration in both conscious (such as being stupid or careless) or unconscious (such as being drunk) mode.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. They probably think what they posted before seemed stupid to them now.</td>
<td>13. They did not think carefully what to say in a post.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Oh he/she did a stupid thing again?!?!</td>
<td>14. embarrassed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. That they need to think more about what they share with the social media world.</td>
<td>15. They regret posting it for whatever reason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Careless</td>
<td>16. The person might have committed a mistake or realized his post would cause much controversy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. They must have been drunk when they wrote it</td>
<td>17. I would think that they were either being deceptive or trying to hide something about themselves, personal image based.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Either the person was drunk when s/he posted initially or the person received negative feedback from others.</td>
<td>18. They wanna hide something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. This person might haven't decided what should be said and how to say it.</td>
<td>19. They embarrassed about what they posted, and don't want people to see it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Probably he/she regrets his/her posts after second thoughts.</td>
<td>20. They are annoying on social media.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. He or she is embarassed or is having second thoughts about their post.</td>
<td>21. Regret posting it, or relates to personal stuff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I would think they realized they didn't mean to say what they said OR maybe they didn't get enough likes/attention for their post and they seriously care about that.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correction of editorial mistakes</td>
<td>Responses interpret social media deletion as a way to eliminate incorrect/outdated information, spelling errors or wording.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Editorial mistake they needed to correct</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. It seems like it would be normal because print seems more reliable than speech, but really internet writing is consistently full of errors.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. They might have found that it was not true and could mislead people.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. That they received new information contradicting their earlier claim or that they no longer felt it necessary to share this information.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. If someone deleted his/her own post, I think this means that they felt it was false, or something was misspelled or incorrect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. they know something they don't before</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. They made a mistake, or wrote something that could potentially be offensive.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. They might made a mistake</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influenced by others</th>
<th>Responses indication post deletion happens because the poster was influenced by other people.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. May be influenced by someone else to delete</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. They were unhappy with the responses that they received from others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. It could have been a hacked update or something they realized later should not be seen by the public (or just needed edits!)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The person was hacked or the person felt self-conscious about whatever it is that was posted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. They probably got self-conscious about it and thought somebody would judge them because of their post.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>