

Social Network and Online Community Paper

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Introduction to Social Media

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2/7/2026

Abstract

This paper looks at Discord as an example of an online community and Instagram as an example of a social network while using Howard's Design to Thrive to explain the difference. While both platforms allow people to interact online they are designed for different types of social experiences. Discord focuses more on a group of people interacting, sharing rules, and building a sense of belonging which fits with an online community. Instagram on the other hand is built more around profiles, personal connections, and sharing content with a wide audience which reflects a social network. This paper explains how each platform is organized, how people interact with each of them, and what kind of activities they support. By connecting these real world platforms to concepts in Design to Thrive this paper will show how design influences the way people form relationships and communicate.

Introduction

Online platforms play a major role in how people communicate and connect with each other every single day. Even though lots of platforms seem similar they are usually designed for different purposes and types of interaction. Howard explains that online communities are built around shared goals, continuing interaction, and a sense of belonging while social networks focus more on individual connection and the flowing of information. This paper uses those ideas

to look at Discord as an online community and Instagram as a social network. By really analyzing how each platform is organized, how users interact, and what kinds of activities they support, this paper will show how their designs shape the way people use them and experience them.

Identifying the Community and the Network

According to Design to Thrive an online community is made up of people who share a common purpose and interact with each other regularly in a space that has its own rules. A social network on the other hand is more centered on individual users and their personal connections with each other with an emphasis on sharing content across a wide group of people.

Discord fits the idea of an online community because it is organized into servers that bring people together who are interested in the same topic, hobbies, or games. People usually choose to join a server because they want to be part of a group and they stay active by talking in voice channels. Over time these servers create their own norms, jokes, and ways of interacting which helps create a shared identity with the other members. The use of rules, moderators, and assigned roles also shows that these spaces are more structured than just a loose group of connections.

Instagram fits the idea of a social network because it focuses on individual profiles and the connections between them. Users follow other accounts to see their posts to build their own list of connections. Instead of interacting mainly in group spaces people usually engage with content through likes, comments, and direct messages. While users can find others' similar interests through hashtags or trends the main focus is still on personal accounts and the networks that form around the accounts. This matches Howard's description of social networks as systems designed to connect people and spread information rather than support long term interaction.

Organizational Structure of the Online Community (Discord)

The structure of a Discord community is usually based on different roles and levels of responsibility. At the top are the server owner and administrators who control the main settings and make decisions about rules and permissions. Moderators help enforce these rules, manage conflicts, and keep the space as welcoming as possible. Regular members make up most of the community and take part in all of the conversations, activities, and events. Some servers give special roles to certain members like people who help run events or provide support.

Discord servers are divided into channels which help organize conversations by purpose or topic. For example there might be a channel for announcements, one for the general chat, and others for specific interests. This type of setup makes it easier for members to find the right place to talk and stay involved within the community without feeling overwhelmed. As Howard points out, having a clear structure and expectations can help an online community stay active and organized. Discord's particular design supports this by giving communities tools to shape their own space.

Organizational Structure of the Social Network (Instagram)

Instagram is organized mainly around single individuals rather than groups. Each person has their own profile where they can post content and show a short description of their life. There are no formal roles like moderators within networks although Instagram controls the platform itself by setting rules and using systems to remove content that breaks its policies.

Connections are made by following other accounts which creates a mutual link between people. Posts are shown in a feed which is influenced by what people interact with and what the platform's algorithm thinks they'll be interested in. This particular design makes it easy for content to spread quickly and for people to find other people easily. According to Howard, social

networks are often built to help people grow their connections and share information in a huge way and Instagram's structure supports that goal.

Relationships Between Members of the Community

Relationships that are grown within the Discord community are usually more personal and long lasting than the connections people make on social networks. Because members talk to each other regularly in the same space they start to remember people's names and build trust over time. This can be seen in things like continuing conversations, group activities, and members helping each other with problems.

Howard says that strong communities usually make people feel like they belong. Many Discord servers do this by recognizing active members and giving out special roles to certain people. You also have the option to use voice and video chat which makes conversations feel more natural and personal which can strengthen the relationships between members.

Activities Facilitated and Supported by the Network

Instagram mainly supports things related to sharing and interacting with content. Users can post videos, photos, and stories to express themselves, keep in touch with others, and promote any personal or business projects. People interact with this content by liking posts, leaving comments, and sending direct messages to others.

From Howard's point of view social networks are designed for flexible and quick interactions across a large number of people. Instagram is a great example of this because by making it easy for users to join trends, hashtags, and to dive into any popular content. These features help ideas and information spread to a bigger audience showing how the platform supports large scale connection rather than close knit groups.

Conclusion

Even though both Discord and Instagram allow people to connect online they both serve different purposes and create different types of experiences. Discord works as an online community because it encourages shared goals, roles, and continuing interaction among members. Instagram works as a social network because it focuses on single profiles, expanding connections, and sharing content with a huge audience. Using some of the ideas from Design to Thrive this paper shows how the way a platform is designed can shape how people build relationships, communicate, interact in online spaces.

Reference Page

Howard, T. W. (2010). *Design to thrive: Creating social networks and online communities that last*. Morgan Kaufmann.