

# Cultural critique on the internet

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Through the onset of industrialization, countries all over the world had experienced remarkable changes in its society. Sophisticated technologies, gadgets and facilities had been made available to man. These inventions, which are results of man's work, pave the way to the society's advancements. One of the most remarkable artifacts that the new milieu brought into picture is the internet.

The advent of the internet came into vision “ when people in the early 1960s saw great potential value in allowing computers to share information on research and development in scientific and military fields” (Brief History of the Internet). J. C. R. Licklider was said to be the pioneering person of the internet. In 1962, he proposed a global network of computers and work to develop it (Brief History of the Internet). The initial efforts of Licklider had inspired other people to participate in designing and bringing internet into a complete picture.

The theory of packet switching developed by Leonard Kleinrock ‘ forms the basis of internet connections. ’ In the year 1969, ARPANET (initial name given to internet) was brought on line. It was first used to connect four Universities in the United States to provide a channel for research communication and exchange. Early times of internet use and connection were very complex. Furthermore, the use of the internet was only limited to education, government and research use.

Commercial use of the internet was then prohibited. This prohibition was put to an end when the ‘ dot-com boom’ in the second half of 1990's hit the stock market and media (Gozzi Jr. 470). Investments for the commercialization of the internet were in demand during these years. It was

also during these times when Microsoft had its ' full scale entry into browser, server and Internet Service Provider market completed the shift t a commercially based Internet' (A Brief History of the Internet).

As seen today, the internet industry or the ' dot-com' economy is continuously growing and taking an advance step everyday. The definition as well as the description of the internet was finalized and passed as a resolution on October 24, 1995. The following statement provides the definition and description of the internet: RESOLUTION: The Federal Networking Council (FNC) agrees that the following language reflects our definition of the term " Internet".

" Internet" refers to the global information system that -- (i) is logically linked together by a globally unique address space based on the Internet Protocol (IP) or its subsequent extensions/follow-ons; (ii) is able to support communications using the Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol (TCP/IP) suite or its subsequent extensions/follow-ons, and/or other IP-compatible protocols; and (iii) provides, uses or makes accessible, either publicly or privately, high level services layered on the communications and related infrastructure described herein (Leiner et al n.

p). This technology grants mechanism to people throughout the globe to process and relay information without regard for geographic location. It has been a channel for communication, business, community operations and education. It opened the possibilities of on line learning and business negotiation and made the life of individuals to be modern and sophisticated. Through the onset of this technology, advancement in the society and

man's culture also took place. The benefits that this technology brings are said to be limitless and essential.

However, at present times, people seem to abuse the use of the internet. Such abuse initiated the negative implications and harm of the said artifact to the society as a whole. The internet has also brought succor to the lives of many people in economically less developed countries that have a somewhat substandard educational system. This is by way of accessing the online learning materials of world-class universities around the world. They are able to access up-to-date information on almost all subjects and upgrade their knowledge.

The community had too much relied on the features of the internet. In an article written by Greenblatt, he argued that the rise of the internet had negatively affected traditional television (149). It is feared that the internet would eventually kill television as it does in the music industry and in the print media. Competition between traditional television and the internet arises. It was noted in the article of Greenblatt that people spend less time in viewing the television than they do in the net. Through online streaming, watching sports, concert of artists, etc is now possible.

It is shown that the traditional way of watching (i. e. with the use of television) had been altered due to internet boom. While it can be said that the presence of internet provides the benefit for individuals to watch programs in their most convenient time, it is still unfair because other industries suffer. Too much dependence of the public to the internet had brought the problem of unfair competition. People's way of socializing was

also altered through the use of the internet. The usual way of meeting and knowing a particular person had been changed.

Most people use the internet to meet and socialize with new people. This has been made possible through the use of chat rooms as well as other internet sites like friendster. The value of having friends is not the main question being posed. The threat for such sites and chat rooms is the opportunity for on line prostitution and other crimes to take place (Clemmitt 450). The internet had (in no doubt) expanded prostitution, bringing it available not only on the area where a certain prostitute lives but also in nearby cities or town.

The invention of the internet has also given rise to a new kind of addiction, which is online porn addiction where ‘ there's no doubt that some people's porn consumption gets them in trouble -- in the form of maxed-out credit cards, lost sleep, neglected responsibilities, or neglected loved ones’ (Martin F. Downs). Violent acts of children are also partly blamed on the internet. On line games which most children and youngsters play depict violence which eventually changes their psychological behavior.

The increase in violent acts of these youngsters eventually contributes to an increase in crime. Early exposure of these youngsters to act of violence and other adult materials can bring unfavorable effect to their perception about the reality. Addiction to these on line games had also reduced their time for physical activities therefore bringing the problem of obesity. ‘ Dr Robinson from the British Nutrition foundation said 40% of boys and 60% of girls were found to spend less than the recommended one hour per day in physical activity’ (BBC News).

Moreover, child pornography on the internet is one of the bad practices that the internet has been able to cultivate. Aside from children being used as prostitutes, other young children also visit pornographic sites. This does untold psychological damage to these children as they do not know what is right and what is not. They are sometimes compelled to practice what they have seen, thereby contributing to the increasing level of moral decadence. Also the danger of teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and other forms of bad deeds has been blown out of proportion by exposure to the internet.

The most controversial and frightening contribution of the internet is the opportunity that it provides for act of terrorism. Terrorists are availing the opportunity to connect with the internet and used this artifact as a propaganda tool (Anderson 25). Acts of terrorism can now be perpetuated now, easier than before with the use of the internet. The most benign way of this act is the production of malicious softwares in the form of computer viruses, worms, Trojans and crawlers. This causes instability of these computer machines, to the detriment of the user.

every machine that is connected to the internet is potentially a broad casting station, a printing press or a place of assembly, terrorists can now disseminate their information undiluted by the media and untouched by government censors. In the past, the al-Qaeda had benefited from the extensive use of the internet not until their network was intercepted. The following statement, which basically tackles on how terrorists' actions were improved through the aid of the internet, was cited in Anderson's work (2003).

“ Using the Internet for communication can increase speed of mobilization and allow more dialogue between members, which enhances the organization’s flexibility, since tactics can be adjusted more frequently. Individuals with a common agenda and goals can form subgroups, meet at a target location, conduct terrorist operations, and then readily determine their relationships and re-disperse” (27). Documents accessed through internet connection also provided the Al-Queada to obtain details regarding the design lay out of the World Trade Center which contributed to the success of making their plans.

The Al-Queada group had developed their action in using the internet as a tool for terrorism. It is alarming to think that future terrorists would follow the step taken by the mentioned group and may even develop more powerful and sophisticated programs that would aid in the threat of terrorism. The internet had initiated the risk of cyber terrorism. Internet’s role in shaping today’s culture is indeed remarkable and at the same time threatening. Pioneers of the internet may have the pure intention to bring the world in the state of modernization.

However, it is sad to know that upon the onset of modernization comes the threat and harm that the internet posed. Overuse, misuse and overdependence of people in this technology will in no doubt bring several detrimental effects. As discussed from the examples above, actions of people as well as their cultural identity are negatively being altered by the mere presence of the internet. The world is increasingly being described as being ‘ westernised’ since everyone, especially the youth, are increasingly turning to the way of life of the Americans and Europeans.

The internet's original purpose of making information accessible, sharing this information in a fast pace and making long distance communication possible had been abusively used by some people therefore bringing a negative impact on the society's culture. Our world nowadays is continuously progressing and accompanying this progress is the innovation of new artifacts. Truly, these new artifacts had taken a vital role in shaping our society's culture as well as shaping the minds of people. These innovations would be more likely to be inevitable.

Every new artifact is invented to somehow benefit and bring people a comfortable way of living, however, one should not overlook the harm that these new artifacts may bring. Every time that we take a step towards advancement comes the opportunity for societal and cultural change. These changes bring forth several issues and problems that are more likely to have negative outcomes. The internet has had its effects on society at present and it will have its effects in the future. The future of the internet is faced with the question on how management of change and evolution would be done.

The internet has got the potential of turning the world to a single-culture, single language world. This would have far reaching effects as it would eliminate the numerous world cultures that have been built since the beginning of time. All the ancient civilizations are still visible today because they have been preserved in one way or the other. Because of this, people travel to these locations as tourists. In this way, the memories are kept alive. The rate the internet craze is going, this trend is likely to be reversed since people can see these locations on the screens of their computers.

Let us not keep ourselves to be tongue tied and see how the negative outcomes abolish our cultural and societal identity. We should act on this matter. Action, they say, is louder than voice. Work Cited Anderson, Alison. "Risk, Terrorism, and the Internet." *Knowledge, Technology & Policy* 16 (2003): 24-33 BBC News, "HealthSymptoms in Obese children." 16 May 2008 . "Brief History of the Internet." 28 May 2008 . Clemmitt, Marcia. "Prostitution debate." *CQ Researcher*, May 23, 2008: CQ Researcher Online. Capella Lib.

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