

Essay on digital forms of communication

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



Introduction

Since modern computers and the use of internet technology have been introduced, people have become more dependent on digital forms of business transactions and communications to the point that a significant portion of them could not survive without relying on such technologies.

Digital communication may refer to the physical transfer of data or any form information regardless of the purpose (e. g. business or for communications) from one point to another by means of the internet or any communication channel that makes use of copper wires, fiber optic wires, storage media, and wireless forms of communication, among others.

This is naturally a more advanced and faster form of communication compared to non-digital forms of communication in which it is impossible to transfer data or information towards a remote channel or location. The use and popularity of digital forms of communication have been largely propelled by the proliferation of more advanced computing machines—computers, and the introduction and continuous improvements on and exploitation of the internet. Add the fact that national governments in partnership with telecommunication giants are investing in and are actually promoting the use of cloud computing and we can already say that we are already living in an era where everything, from simple business tasks down to simple gestures of communications can be done remotely, digitally, and within a blink of an eye. The objective of this paper is to discuss how digital forms of communication have shaped human experiences emphasizing on the effects of being highly engaged in social networking sites or platforms within the context of forming relationships.

Consideration of How Digital Forms of Communication has Shaped Human Experiences

The World Wide Web or what is also known as the Internet has become an almost permanent part of our culture and everyday life. This virtual environment is in fact what gave birth to all the forms of digital communication. The internet can be used to broadcast any form of information ranging from a series of small phrases containing a central message up to large-sized still images, voice messages, and videos and motion pictures. Anything that has something to do with communications can already be done virtually. Perhaps the most popular and widely used aspect of the World Wide Web is the one that lets its users access social networking sites and or platforms. Some of the most popular of which include but may not be limited to Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The question now is this: did the proliferation of these social networking sites bring positive changes with the way how every member of this society communicates or did it merely complicate or even threaten a supposedly simple mechanism which may well be considered an essential means of existence. The truth is that no matter how introvert a certain person may be, this person could not afford to live a life wherein he is absolutely isolated from the others (i. e. his family, friends, and other people). At some point in his life, he would have to initiate or be a part of a communication process. This conforms to the idea that communication is as essential as eating, drinking, and wearing clothing .

The development of a highly digitalized culture and digital forms of communication has been largely due to the high level of technical change that the world has experienced in the past years or even decades if you will.

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There are five main things that should be considered according to Neil Postman's works about advancements in technology. Firstly, he stated that people will always have to pay a price, often a steep one, for technology. In most cases, the greater the advancement in technology that society years, the higher the price they will have to pay. Secondly, in any scenario wherein there is an introduction of a new technological advancement, there would always be winners and losers. In which case, it would be the winners who would always try to persuade the losers that they are, in fact, the winners, even though that they are not.

Thirdly, he argued that social prejudice would almost always be embedded in any event wherein there is technological advancement. What is remarkable about the presence of this social prejudice is that it can either work to or against the people's advantage. Fourth, Postman also stated that technological changes are not merely additives to any current global system but are ecological which means that their effects are collective because they can lead to dramatic changes. Lastly, he mentioned the tendency of technology and current technological advancements to become mythic. This means that such changes or advancements may be perceived as a part of a natural order of things, which often ends up in a situation wherein the advancements tend to control more or a larger part of our lives than what is actually good or beneficial for us .

The two most remarkable points according to Neil Postman's theories about technological advances are his fourth and fifth points. In his fourth point, he mentioned that technological advances cannot really be considered as mere additives to an existing system mainly because of the fact that their effects

are ecological or revolutionary, which means that even a single change can change the entire way how an existing system works. In this case, the technological advancement we are talking about is the development and use of digital culture and forms of communication. It would be important to remember what happened when the first few forms of digital communication were introduced. A few months to a few years after that remarkable event, we could see that the way how people, businesses, and other types of organizations interact have changed dramatically. Data and information that used to be shared via courier, express package delivery services, and other physical means of sharing began to be transferred via digital means such as through electronic mails, telephones, cellular phones, and file sharing sites, and even social media platforms. This is perhaps the best real-life manifestation of Postman's fourth point about technological advances. In his fifth point, Postman explained how technological advances, or in this case, the digitalization of things such as culture and forms of communication, tend to become mythic or a natural part of the order of things and how they (refers to technological advances) can easily take control more of our lives than what is actually good for us. At some point we can consider that his fifth point was a combination of his first three points. We can easily relate Postman's fifth point to the subject of digital culture and digital forms of communication. It can be remembered that it was not the last time that the development of the internet for business and communication purposes, among others, was not a one-time thing. Its development can be better characterized by a series of events, all of which lead to where we currently are with regards to the use of that technology

today. Therefore, this confirms the first half of Postman's fifth point about technological advances which explain how technological advances can become a part of the natural order of things.

The second half of his fifth point, however, explains a different thing. It basically explains how people or their lives could be ruined rather than aided by these technological advances. This leads us to the question whether digital forms of communication or on a larger scale, the use of the internet carries some negative effects or otherwise. According to a collection of studies about the negative effects of the digital culture and the digital forms of communication, and the uncontrolled use of the internet and other digital media such as cellphones and computers, among others could easily lead to abnormal levels of elevation in exasperation, frustration, and a general decline in people's, especially the children, ability to communicate more effectively .

These manifestations can easily be seen on people who have become overly dependent on the use of social media platforms and other internet-based platforms as a means of communication. What is often taken for granted about the digitalized forms of communication is that even though it makes communication faster, easier, and more cost-efficient, the quality of the conversation or interaction cannot really be compared to that of a real conversation that involves real physical contact between the sender and the receiver . The experience of talking to another person or a group of people in a social media platform cannot really be compared to the experience of physically talking to another person or a group of people . At this point, people have to realize that the fundamental reason why digital forms of

communication were developed was to serve as mere adjuncts to the real and organic way of communicating.

Another important theory or point to consider when it comes to the discussion of digital forms of communication would be that of Zygmunt Bauman. He pioneered the work on Liquid Modernity in 2000. It is in this work where he explained that society's passage from solid to liquid modernity created a new and unprecedented setting for individual life pursuits confronting individuals with a series of challenges never before encountered and that social forms and institutions no longer have enough time to solidify and cannot serve as frames of reference for human actions and long term life plans, so individuals have to find other ways to organize their lives .

Before we can fully understand what Bauman really proposes in his theory, we should first be able to understand what the term liquid means in his theory of liquid modernity. Liquid modernity is, in fact, a characteristic of modernity wherein participants in interactions can easily shift from one social position to another, in a fluid manner at that. This means that any individual who is involved in this type of modernity can easily start any form of interaction with another person or a group of people and then shift to another form of such, often in as easy as a snap of a finger way. Liquid modernity is like multi-tasking done in a grander stage. According to Bauman, a too liquid continuation of modernity can lead to chaotic events as it requires people to focus on a lot of things, something which humans have been continuously proven to be not good at.

Social nomadism which can be best characterized by a person who lives his

life like a tourist, changing places, spouses, jobs, values, and on the extremes, even social, political, religious, and sexual orientation, every so often, is one of the direct consequences of liquid modernity. In turn, social nomadism leads to a weakened or even a broken traditional network of support that encourages a lot of shifts and changes rather than stability in a person's life.

This is indeed one of the major consequences or drawbacks of the proliferation of digital culture and digital forms of communication. It encourages people to engage themselves in a lot of changes to the point that they enter a stage wherein they become a prisoner of their own existential creation.

This leads us to the question whether people did become more connected or not, in a world where digital culture and digital forms of communication are becoming more and more mainstream. The answer to this question mainly depends on the person who is answering's definition of the term connection. The author of this paper reckons that this question can be best answered by using the relationship between quality and quantity as a basis. If we are going to define being more connected based on the number of connections an individual or a group can make using digital forms of communication, then we can say that the digitalization of culture indeed led to a more connected society, or if we are going to use Bauman's theory, a society propelled by liquid modernity. Quality-wise, however, it would appear that people, as a result of their overdependence on digital forms of communication, have become less connected. They could barely hold on to

their existing jobs and relationships because they have been too busy imprisoning themselves in their own existential creation.

Conclusions

In the end, no matter what theory we use, it can be said that there are good and bad things that have happened as a result of the digitalization of culture and of the forms of communication, as supported by the works of Postman. People have become more connected with each other quantity-wise. That is, the initiation of communication and interaction has been made easier and more cost-efficient, thanks to the wide availability of digital means to do it (e. g. the use of the internet and social media platforms). When it comes to the quality of interactions and line of communications that digital means of communication have provided people with, however, it goes the other way. This means that due to the fact that relationships and interactions have been so much easier to build, they (relationships and interactions) have also become so much easier to fade and destroy as a result.

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