

New media today

[Technology](#)



Perhaps the most important and fastest growing part of the Internet is the World Wide Web (WWW). The idea of a WWW suggests a global network communication, bringing people from all over the world close together virtually. With the electronic mail, messages can be sent and received faster as compared to the traditional form of postal service. Research suggests that the use of the Internet will accelerate the creation of new cultures and new ways to view the world (Synder, 1997, p. 224). Hence, the Internet allows youths to experience a national exposure.

Youths are virtually growing up with the Internet and seeing its role as an extension to their everyday life activities, where information and ideas are exchanged and conversations are developed. They engage in online conversations with friends and family in processing and building their social worlds as well as forming their identities. Youths engage in interactive media such as the Internet Relay Chat (IRC) where they can express and experiment with aspects of their personality. The creation of emoticons or smileys on computer networks is interesting for the youths.

These are computer graphical iconic language of their own to represent a whole range of emotions (Pavlik, 1998, p. 13) which can be used in their chat conversations. Simultaneously, they can also foster relationships with other participants from the chat networks. In addition, forums and discussion groups allow youths to participate, giving them an opportunity to express their feelings, thoughts and perceptions on issues without the fear of facing the crowd. Anyone who has access to the Internet can become an author, expressing their own sense of identity to other users around the world.

The Internet offers a space for young people to try out new personalities and ideas. It creates a place through which individuals may be able to construct their identity, formulate their ideas and build a community of support. New media technologies also allow young consumers to become a producer as well. For example, writable compact disc and Digital Versatile Disc (DVD) technologies are easily available and youths have the power to reproduce exact copies of audio, video or text (Poster, 2001, p. 48). The Internet also offers the youths a vast domain of information for easy reproduction.

Web surfers can now think of themselves as producers as digitised music is available on the Internet where they can be downloaded and played on one's personal computer or transferred into digital form to a portable player. Youths have the concept that participating in computer networks will increase their chances for learning and engaging in online discussions, forums and chats. They may see the Internet as a communication medium where they can search for information through search engines and create their own content, distribute and share it with the world.

Hence, there is a correlation between new media and creativity where creative youngsters can expose themselves to more opportunities for different ideas (Kline & Clarke, 1971, p. 43). Without doubt, the appearance of the Internet has a significant impact on youths' personal lives. Mobile phone is another form of electronic medium where youths become very much attached to and begin to relate to it rather than to other people. The popularity of the mobile phone among youths may be associated with the " trends in modernity and individualisation of youth cultures" (Skog, 2001, p.

270). With the integration of various facilities including the ability to download ring tones, logos, pictures and games, youths are not only seen as consumers of the electronic media but also producers as they possess the aptitude to create unique features with their mobile phones. Functions such as Wireless Application Protocol (WAP), Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS) and Short Message Service (SMS) present them with the opportunity of not only being able to connect and interact with friends and family, but also to access the Internet with wireless devices.

In Norway, two-thirds of teenagers own or have access to mobile phones (Skog, 2001, p. 255). A data obtained from an October 2000 self-selection sample survey in Norway on 67 teenage girls and 53 boys were analysed with questions concerning the importance and their use of mobile phones. From the results, there were minor differences in the ways both genders use the mobile phones. 55% of girls and 45% of boys stressed the importance of mobile design and boys use the WAP function more often as compared to girls (Skog, 2001, p. 259).

This goes to show that boys emphasise more on the technical aspects of the phone while girls stress on the performance facilities. With this, it can draw on the masculine and feminine natures of boys and girls respectively, where boys are regarded as the 'hard masters' of the mobile phone and girls as the 'soft masters' (Skog, 2001, p. 268). It also showed that a majority of the youths who own a mobile phone come from a working class background. Hence, possessing a mobile phone can allow people to know or guess a youth's social class background.

With the mobile phone, young people can be easily reached by friends and family as well as being informed and updated with the latest trends. Thus, mobile phone which is seen as a perfect tool for modernity, serves as a convenience and necessity for the youths too. Despite the opportunities for greater efficiency and exploring one's self-identity, there are significant consequences that the new media of today present. One of which is post modern fragmentation. Instead of supporting a stable identity, new media can fragment and result in portraying multiple identities.

Many post modern theorists argued that the society has become a "mere mass" (Miles, 2000, p. 50), where individuals and social classes are no longer composed. As media spread throughout each household, the time spent at home is mostly with the media rather than with family members. Hence, family togetherness and ties may be disrupted. In short, it can be said that new media are "crumbling down the walls of distance" (Pool, 1990, p. 34) where social relationships can slowly diminish as communication is no longer restricted to face-to-face interactions.

It is also said that new media have the ability of controlling youths' consciousness, thereby controlling who they are and how they think. There are also fears that new media will be an industry corrupting youths' values in life as they get exposed to inappropriate and controversial content such as drug abuse, sex and violence on the Internet, thus leading to "moral panics and devaluation of a society's culture" (O'Shaughnessy, 1999, p. 9). More radically, new media of today may pose a danger to the traditional forms of media such as the print and television industries.

This can eventually signal the slow death of the first media age. Lastly, globalisation understood as a " process in which complex interconnections are rapidly developing between societies, institutions, cultures and individuals worldwide" (Barr, 2000, p. 31) can result from the new media and create a stressful world where people may not be able to cope efficiently with rapid changes that new media has brought about. With the world simply out of one's control, the society can be in turmoil, threatened by nuclear war or catastrophes and civil uprisings.

To conclude, I have discussed on the new media of today in relation to youth utilisation and the various adverse effects new media may have on youths and the society. Indeed, the new media play a pivotal role in youths' lives, helping the young population to see and identify themselves differently. With the introduction of new technological innovations, the lives of many young people have changed. To a remarkable degree, they plan their personal schedules to accommodate the new media of today.

Truly, youths live in an electronically mediated environment whereby their society is constituted by the media. To end off my essay, I have asked myself this question: Are youths controlled by the new media or do they have the freedom and choice on how to utilize them? Having done much reading, I generally see that youths are controlled by the new media but through one's rationality and consciousness, they do have the ability to change things by making choices themselves. After all, they are the leading generation who will be engaging in the use of new media today.