

The social and cultural implications of the internet media essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The remit of this essay is to discuss the social implication of the internet. It will focus on research findings and the work of authors and theorist in this field. A critical approach will raise arguments both in support and against the implications of the internet. An evaluation of the evidence will assist in the conclusion of the essay.

‘ In 1973 American computer scientist, Vinton Cerf contributed to the invention of the Internet and its development of transmission protocols. This project was sponsored by the United States Department of defence, Advanced Research projects agency and directed by American engineer Robert Kahn’. Ament (2007)

‘ Worldwide network of thousands of computers and computer networks. It is a public, voluntary, and cooperative effort between the connected institutions and is not owned or operated by any single organization’.

If we single out the section that states “ is not owned or operated by any single organisation” this alone should raise questions regarding social intrusion and its social implication and ramification, the most important issue here, is that there is no control on what is available via this extensive accessible medium.

With technological advancement and public accessibility the internet has become a mass medium and has changed our world dramatically. It has evoked strong public discussions from one extreme to the next on its implications on society. On one hand, the internet can be seen for its great benefits, it has become a public forum in the form of freedom, connectivity and many other social benefits which continue to evolve at an accelerating

<https://assignbuster.com/the-social-and-cultural-implications-of-the-internet-media-essay/>

rate. However, others recognise its faults and its harm within various social structures, to culture, morality and human relations and others who are not so extreme in their views but are able to recognise both its advantages and disadvantage but remain vigilant of its existing negative impacts.

The following is an excerpt from the book 'Release'; author Esther Dyson, where she acknowledges the social and cultural implications of the internet.

'The net offers us a chance to take charge of our own lives and to redefine our role as citizens of local communities and of global society. It also hands us the responsibility to govern ourselves, to think for ourselves, to educate our children, to do business honestly, and to work with fellow citizens to design rules we want to live by'. (Dyson 1997)

Esther Dyson is implying that the internet enables individuals who share the same interest, values and beliefs to come together and offers them the chance to build a society or community. Here these individuals are able to converse their work, engage in truth-telling which allows trust to be built between people, and can act as a second home for many.

The internet has given religious leaders cause for concern as this extreme position depicted by the Council of Torah sages who are a group of orthodox rabbis in Israel who enforced a rule in the banning of the internet from all Jewish homes in 2000. According to a news bulletin posted online by Linda Harrison (2000) which states that the internet is described as 'the worlds leading cause of temptation'. It is also said that the internet is "1,000 times more dangerous than television" and were banned thirty years earlier,

although the Council were able to recognise some benefits that the internet
<https://assignbuster.com/the-social-and-cultural-implications-of-the-internet-media-essay/>

possesses, they saw and defined the internet as “moral pollution”. They considered the possibility of internet addiction in many youths which would stop any motivation to learn the Torah. In support of this according to online Islamic news website claims that a new law has been enforced in Syria of the banning of certain websites for example, websites which publish information criticising the president and his family. Not quite as extreme as the council of Torah sages, Syria too wants to have control over what it being made available online and hope this new internet law will be effective.

Many internet critics, unlike the Council of Torah sages, see some positives in the internet and its technology, and many of them are able to recognise its faults to the medium. In the main the general public form their own opinions on what they believe to be advantages and disadvantage of the internet and can differ in the way in which they are able to use them against one another.

Underneath these is the different value systems people hold in relation to the internet. For example, Esther Dyson values a libertarian system, where a person’s freedom, property rights and free market capitalism are maximized. This positive attitude towards the internet is based on the potential she believes that technology uses to promote these values. In contrast to this, the values held by the Council of Torah sages are of a Hareidi nature. These are a variety of orthodox Jews, which according to them the highest good is the obedience of God’s law which has been laid out in the Torah, they formulate and base many of their values according to what is written in the Torah and conclude that the internet is harmful.

The internet is best known for providing the ability for freedom of speech, connectivity, access to information, communication, and entertainment, developing and maintaining social relations. All of these are functions; the internet has been designed specifically to provide services for individuals allowing them to successfully perform many different tasks. It is claimed that the internet has adapted other benefits which were not intentional such as, development and understand of a variety of different cultures and social backgrounds.

This is due to the vast amount of information the internet houses which allow anyone, anywhere to access. Information is continuously being made available by millions of individuals who are lucky enough to have access to the internet. Reliable information is of huge importance to the functioning for those who use the internet. If people trust the information provided on the internet they will continue to use and pass around information encouraging more people to access it. It allows individuals to gain more knowledge and acquire information which is seen as a huge benefit to our society.

Another advantage of the internet is known as Information dissemination this enables anyone easily and inexpensively to upload and disseminate any information which can be made available to a wide audience, which can very quickly become widespread reaching millions of people. This helps promote freedom of speech by giving people the ability to share and voice there opinions, where they can inform and influence others. This is considered to be a benefit however; how people interpret this information can determine whether freedom of speech can be considered a benefit.

The internet has a huge impact on how users are able to communicate with each other. The internet allows one-to-one, one-to-many, and many-to-many to communicate over the internet easily and inexpensively through the use of social networking sites and chatrooms such as Facebook, Myspce, and MSN Messenger. Users are able to communicate with a variety of individuals across the globe; this goes far beyond the idea of dissemination of information. Communication over the internet allows two or more people to express and share their values and opinions with each other, which could lead to the creation of intimacy and the following of actions. Communication is of great importance to individuals and the internet is used to enhance communication and is considered a great benefit.

The internet allows development and maintenance of social relations to take place with people outside one's surrounding area. It is very important that social relations are able to function in society between individuals. The internet provides services which allow the development and the maintenance of social relations to continue to grow. For example social networking sites like Facebook and forms of leisure and entertainment. For example, individuals are able to set up forums where they are able to interact with each other playing games, discussing hobbies and interest which allow sharing and trading to take place, Individuals are able to share cultural jokes, pictures, software, music and videos.

Despite this, the internet has some frequently mentioned flaws. These disadvantages come directly from the internet's benefits. One can not deny the fact that the internet creates new possibilities for communication, social interaction, entertainment and many more. However, it can be argued that <https://assignbuster.com/the-social-and-cultural-implications-of-the-internet-media-essay/>

when these services are performed over the internet they tend to become much more harmful than they would be when performed in reality.

According to Hubert Dreyfus a Professor of Philosophy at the University of California who suggested that 'online social relationships tend to be less profound, valuable and durable than offline relationships, and that computer-mediated communication less expressive and authentic than face-to-face communication' (Dreyfus, 2001), meaning that if relationships are started and developed over the internet between two people, when meeting each other for the first time face-to-face complications may occur. The ways in which two people interact with each other over the internet differ from when face-to-face. For example, body language and facial expression is made visible when face-to-face compared to when interacting online. It can be said that because people are able to interact over the internet they tend to take less time and make less effort to involve in face-to-face interactions, which is harmful to how they react in social interactions.

Communicating over the internet can tend to be harmful. Conversations can at times become aggressive and violent. The internet can contain a large amount of disrespectful texts which have been posted by individuals using the internet that others may find offensive. The internet has been used as a form of harassment where the victim has no control over what is being displayed concerning their personal life, compared to if this were being communicated verbally in reality.

Although the internet provides a vast amount of information which can be seen as a positive, it can also be seen as a negative. It is suggested that

<https://assignbuster.com/the-social-and-cultural-implications-of-the-internet-media-essay/>

because of the lack of 'selection mechanisms' the information provided on the internet can at times be false and unreliable. It is difficult to locate sources of different text found on the internet making it lose value. If the information found on the internet can not be trusted less and less people will feel the need to use it giving more traditional ways of finding information more power.

With a vast amount of information comes harmful information. Almost anything and everything can be found on the internet because of the lack of 'selection mechanisms' what is being posted on the internet is hard to locate and remove. The internet contains a large amount of disturbing material which can be easily accessed by anyone using it for example, pornography, violence towards animals and other human beings, extremist ideologies and so on. Most of this is shown in the media compared to the internet it is being controlled and censored to what is being seen.

In concluding the evidence found through research it is clear that the internet raises mixed reaction from both its users and its critics. In order to begin to understand the social and cultural implications of the internet it is vital that one is able to recognise the internet's positive and negative aspects and how each service provided by the internet is used to benefit the individual. The internet allows people to gain a vast amount of knowledge and communicate with people across the globe. Individuals are able to share and receive information concerning personal interests with those with similar interests.

The idea of freedom of speech has no limit although; this can be seen as a concern. It is not possible to control everything that is being circulated over

the internet therefore it is up to us as individuals in how we process and use the information which is being made available. Only if we can acquire an understanding of the social and cultural implications of the internet and relate this to our own values and beliefs as individuals can we then determine whether or not the internet is harmful or has a positive effect.

What is clear is that the internet is a significant part of our modern culture it's invasive and has its own social norms encapsulating societies from around the globe whatever our personal or collective opinions may be it will continue to grow and the question of diluting, restricting or even licensing the internet could have implications on this very unique social structure. Many critics would like to see these restrictions being imposed and like the internet this debate will also continue to grow dividing those for and those against.