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THE IMPACT OF NEW MEDIA ON SOCIETY

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New media is an umbrella-term which includes different technologies. In the opinion of some specialists are considered as new media¹ both blogs, podcast, video games, virtual worlds, Wiki encyclopaedia, and other mobile devices, interactive televisions, and even the web-sites and e-mail.

Others² consider that blogs and virtual worlds must be included in the category of social media because they are encouraging appearance of virtual communities and social networks.

In spite of the differences, some research workers³ identified two common characteristics for majority of definitions. These are:

- spreading the information to a number of receivers which is theoretical infinite, in customized ways, depending on specification for endorsed categories;

- tenure of an equal control about information both of transmitters and receivers.

Other definitions are even more vaguely, considering that new media are represented by all the texts, sounds, images and graphic forms transformed by the computer⁴.

THE CONCEPT OF MULTIMEDIA

The new media technology has generated massive social changes in the behaviour and lifestyle patterns of the consumers. New media

¹ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/high/technology/6653119.stm>

² <http://whatsnewmedia.org/2007/01/15/looking-back-looking-ahead/>

³ http://rebuildingmedia.corante.com/archives/2006/04/27/what_is_new_media.php

⁴ Guțu Dorina, *New Media*, Ed. Tritonic, București, 2007, pag. 16

have shaped modern culture, by affecting the way people behave, communicate, learn and conceive of themselves and their world.

Giovani Sartori announced in the paper „Homo videns, Imbecility through television and Post-Thinking” that we entered in a multimedia period⁵. The concept of multimedia is explained by Sartori through the union in a single media of the written and spoken word, of the sound and the image.

In this multimedia period, that Sartori described, are living together several media, and the television is not anymore the queen of them for some time now. The new sovereign is from now on the computer.

The personal-computer is not only unifying the word, the sound, the image, characteristic specific of television, but introduces row the visible simulated realities, virtual realities. Television is making us see images of real things, she is the “photo” and “cinema⁶” of the real things. In exchange for the computer makes us see imaginary images.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN NEW MEDIA AND MASS MEDIA

One of my objectives is to identify the characteristics of new media and contrast them with the electronic mass media. Given that the medium is the message, I began my analysis by identifying the characteristics or messages of new media that are different from mass media that Marshall McLuhan identified such as the light bulb, telegraph, telephone, radio, phonograph, camera and television.

Studying the specialized bibliography, I identified the following five messages of the Internet:

1. two-way communication;
2. easiness of access to and dissemination of information;
3. continuous learning;
4. alignment and integration;
5. community

Although one or two of these characteristics apply to traditional mass media, what is unique about the Internet is that all five of these

⁵ Giovanni Sartori – “*Homo videns. Imbecilizarea prin televiziune și post gândirea*”, Ed. Humanitas, București, 2005, pag 35

⁶ *Ibidem*

characteristics apply and help define the impact of this medium. As it turns out all of these characteristics also apply to the general class of new media. But these five messages are not complete, and the specialists⁷ revealed that there are also nine other additional properties or messages that characterizes most new media. They are:

6. portability and time flexibility (time-shifting), which provide users with freedom over space and time;

7. convergence of many different media so that they can carry out more than one function at a time and combine -- as is the case with the cameraphone;

8. interoperability without which convergence would not be possible;

9. aggregation of content, which is facilitated by digitization and convergence;

10. variety and choice to a much greater extent than the mass media that preceded them;

11. the closing of the gap between (or the convergence of) producers and consumers of media;

12. social collectivity and cooperation;

13. remix culture which digitization facilitates;

14. the transition from products to services.

Although some of the electronic media McLuhan studied had one or two of these 14 characteristics, by and large these properties apply primarily to new media. The telephone permitted two-way communication but it was a stand-alone non-portable technology until the emergence of the cell phone. The very first form of the cell phone embraced two-way communication and portability but did not incorporate the other 12 messages of new media. The smartphone today, because of interoperability and convergence with other media like the digital camera and the Internet, now aggregates content, provides variety and choice and promotes social collectivity.

New media today seem to have 14 distinct messages that intertwine and support each other. Digitization makes interoperability,

⁷ www.mediashift.com, Robert K. Logan - *The 14 Messages of New Media*

two-way communication, ease of access to information, continuous learning, convergence, aggregation of content, remix culture and the transition from products to services possible. Aggregation of content leads to variety and choice, community, social collectivity and cooperation. Remix and digitization helps close the gap between user and producer, which in turn builds community, variety and choice. Ease of access and dissemination of information leads to continuous learning; social collectivity and cooperation; remix culture; and the closing of the gap between user and producer.

NEW MEDIA CULTURE

Nowadays, the TV viewers can attend the favorite TV transmissions on the screen of the computer. The PC is exceeding by far the native function and now it plays the role of television and multimedia center. It is used in the same time for downloading the TV transmissions from the Internet and to program the digital registration of high definitions and also to see the programs.

In a converged media world, consumers use Apple iPods to make their own music playlists. Personal video recorders allow them to customize television schedules. These consumers⁸ pull stock-market updates, text messages, wallpaper, ring-tones, and short-form video into their mobile phones. They come together in online communities, generate their own content, mix it, and share it on a growing number of social networks.

In this new-media culture, people no longer passively consume media (and thus advertising, its main revenue source) but actively participate in them, which usually means creating content, in whatever form and on whatever scale.

THE BEST PLAYERS OF NEW MEDIA

Today's media revolution, like others before it, is announcing itself with a new and strange vocabulary: Blog, Podcast, Wikis, Wikipedia and Vlogs.

⁸ www.asiamedia.com, Serajul I. Bhuiyan, *Impact of new media technology on society*

A blog, is a type of website where entries are made (such as in a journal or diary), displayed in a reverse chronological order. Blogs often provide commentary or news on a particular subject, such as food, politics, or local news; some function as more personal online diaries⁹. A typical blog combines text, images, and links to other blogs, web pages, and other media related to its topic.

Podcasting is the method of distributing multimedia files, such as audio programs or music videos, over the Internet using either the RSS or Atom syndication formats, for playback on mobile devices and personal computers. The term podcast, like radio, can mean both the content and the method of delivery. A podcast however is distinguished by its ability to be downloaded automatically using software capable of reading RSS or Atom feeds.

Wiki is a piece of server software that allows users to freely create and edit Web page content using any Web browser. Wiki supports hyperlinks and has an simple text syntax for creating new pages and crosslinks between internal pages on the fly. Wiki is unusual among group communication mechanisms in that it allows the organization of contributions to be edited in addition to the content itself.

Wikipedia is an international Web-based free-content encyclopedia project. It exists as a wiki, a website that allows visitors to edit its content. The word Wikipedia itself is a portmanteau of the words wiki and encyclopedia. Wikipedia is written collaboratively by volunteers, allowing most articles to be changed by anyone with access to the website.

A vlog or videoblog is a blog which uses video as the primary content. A typical vlog entry combines an embedded video or video link with supporting text, images, and metadata.

THE EFFECTS OF NEW MEDIA ON SOCIETY

The impact of this new media on society is varied in both positive and negative outlooks.

Internet makes everyone a publisher and everyone a librarian, in that anyone can both produce and retrieve an unprecedented amount

⁹ *Ibidem*

of information. The gate-keeping and agenda-setting functions of the traditional media establishments are bypassed in favor of search engines and directories. Ideally, this means that any person with Internet access (still a fairly small number, confined primarily to the developed world) can gain information about any issue, event, or place, without the restrictions of time, expense, geography, and politics that used to limit such information gathering.

By chatting with strangers in chat rooms and reading international newspapers online, we believe that we are learning about foreign cultures and perspectives directly from the sources.

What is new in this type of communication is that young people today, and not only they, are happy to decide for themselves what is credible or worthwhile and what is not. The old media model was: there is one source of truth. The new media model is: there are multiple sources of truth, and we will sort it out. The mass media audience is no longer a captive, today's media consumer is unique, demanding, and engaged.

This has profound implications for traditional business models in the media industry, which are based on aggregating large passive audiences and holding them captive during advertising interruptions. In the new-media era, audiences will occasionally be large, but often small, and usually tiny.

In fact, the Internet does provide ample opportunity to gain knowledge about far away places, and offers a means of interacting across geographical expanses. In this sense, it is an ideal medium for establishing the sort of "cyber-peace" that is so earnestly desired. By personalizing news portals, web search guides, etc., the user is able to completely isolate himself or herself from issues that require knowledge and experience outside his or her own.

There is a loss of personal one-on-one interaction with real-time voice calls being replaced by multimedia messages. However real-time video calls are empowering people to not only talk to each other while on the move, but also see what each other means through their facial expressions and mannerisms¹⁰. Camera phones and recorders permit users to abuse the technology by taking away privacy rights,

¹⁰ <http://m/cyclopediaofnewmedia.com>, *Mobile phones - convergence - social impact*

however they also allow the opportunity for the moral user to capture special moments.

Furthering this, mobile phone convergence enables greater freedom for the user as they can access their emails and videoconference without being chained to the office, however it makes them answerable to the workplace as they can always be reached through any communication.

INFLUENCES OF NEW MEDIA ON TELEVISION

Statistics shows that traditional television is the media that lose more supporters than any other media in favor of the Internet as the broadband connections to the Internet are spreading. In the same time, the Internet opens new possibilities for the evolution of classical television. So that, a few years ago, after the resounding success of Youtube, (famous for his huge collection of video clips that are seen by millions of visitor everyday), there came out the first television which are broadcast only on the Internet.

Today, the scenery of the TV audience is changing in the whole world and began to look like a desert¹¹ are telling the specialists of the industry. And the first guilty in this case seems to be the Internet which has created so many parallel channels.

Media experts also recognize that there is a revolution in media industry everywhere in the world brought by new media technology or convergent media that changes the way of communication in society.

In the last three years, in the Romanian media landscape there came out some televisions which are broadcast only on the Internet. Some of them have personal contents, others are collecting videos from varied sources, and organize them for the Internet viewers.

ONLINE TELEVISION IN ROMANIA

¹¹ www.zf.ro, Mihai Musatoiu - *Telespectatorii schimbă canalul: de la televizor, la Internet* din 8 Feb 2005, așa cum a fost recepționat la 14 Mar 2008

I will review the most important online televisions from Romania. Until now there have come off Evo TV, Liber TV, Brain TV, HappyFish, Shock TV, Metalhead TV, Arena TV and Tv Copii. The first three of them are the most visited and important online televisions in Romania, consequently the presentation below will refer to those three televisions.

Evo TV was launched a year ago, in april 2007. The site has interesting column as: News4Aliens, Exclusiv Evo, Ro.Mania, Entertain Tv, Beauty Tv, Inside Evo Tv, Green Tv, No limits Tv, Girls Tv, Good music, Training Tv, Business Tv, Imobiliar, Sănătate Tv, Show Tv, Reality Tv, Monden Tv. The videos are EvoTV creation, their topic vary from high society to music, cinema and entertainment, whole of them having the young public as target.

LiberTV has an impressive collection of movies, transmissions, documentaries and podcasters some of them realized by Romanian people. The novelty in this case is the possibility of downloading the videos, but the visitors must install Liber TV Player to reproduce them afterwards. For the moment, all the videos are free for downloading but in the future, the manager of Liber TV is planning to add some sections accessible only for a rate.

BrainTV is the youngest of the three, she started on June 2007. The target is made of intelligent people who are avoiding the soap operas and the “ultramegasensational”. For the moment the videos are reduced to interview on different themes: Internet, Business, Advertising and Showbiz. The comments which are accompanying each video are clear so that the choice is very simple.

The online televisions in Romania are still developing. Under the circumstances is a matter-of-course to ask us if online television can replace traditional television. For the future, precisely in the next two-three years, the chances for the online television to replace of the traditional one are minim.

The online televisions must still fight to form their own public and to equalize at least in diversity the classical tv channel. For all that, online televisions are an alternative which will gain ground thanks the public who is targeted and the new media latest trend.

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