Communication in an Electronic Society

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Summary

Communication is a form of interaction in which messages are sent through channels by using a contextual code. The electronic revolution has brought mass media communication into life. Computer-based communication is the first mass communication medium in which there is a real interaction between the sender and the receiver. This communication has encouraged progress in social, economic, political, cultural, and educational sectors of human life. This article discusses the positive consequences of the expansion of the online world. E-based forms of communication bring integrity to people's lives through online chatting, discussion boards, and e-mails, lead to economic prosperity through marketing and advertising, help to strengthen democracy, encourage cultural globalization and expand knowledge through a large number of educational resources available online.

Key words: mass media communication, electronic communication, feedback, economic and political progress, network, time and space in virtual reality

Introduction

Communication is form of social interaction that involves exchange of information. It engages a sender and a recipient in a dynamic activity of communication. Over centuries, communication has undergone some major development and at least three "revolutions". The first revolution in communication began with the invention of writing systems - the script. However, originally, writing and reading, i.e. access to codified knowledge, remained a privileged activity of the literates and the educated stratum, whereas the experience of the common men remained limited to the face-to-face oral culture. The second revolution came with the invention of mechanised printing, which ultimately made mass literacy possible. This so-called "Gutenberg revolution" also enabled mass education to all social classes. Written text has dominated the structure of knowledge, communication, and culture. The latest third revolution has involved the invention of computer-based information that has given individuals

the power to communicate with other through text, graphic images, and sound instantly and globally.

The impacts of this third revolution are also the topic of this paper. It tries to answer two main questions. What has been the main impact of electronic media on social, economic, political, and educational progress? In what ways do electronic media and Internet-based channels of communication change our worldviews and ways in which we interact?

Computer-mediated communication

The information revolution has created the so-called "information society". Mass media communication started with the electronic revolution as a new way of communication by the use of electronic signal transmission. Through an electronic signal, communication is the process whereby a signal is transmitted from a source via various channels to a recipient. First, there is the transmission and then decoding of signals. The signal is sent from a beginning point through a channel such as a wire or a cable to a receiver. The amount of information is coded and defined by the type of an electronic signal. In e-society, communication is realized by using a sender-channel-receiver pattern. These screen-based multimedia communication networks give us the ability to communicate worldwide without the limitation of time and space. By the use of the Internet, people can transmit and receive large amounts of information quickly to and from individuals and groups from around the world.

Culture of real virtuality

The culture of computer mediated communication is usually referred to as the "culture of real virtuality" (Castells 2003). This is because the virtual reality effectively becomes a real virtuality. In this reality we live reality via electronic media in which there is no real time and no real space. This communication should ensure full participation in a multilingual information society by all citizens, strengthen science and technology, and stimulate international liaison and cooperation.

Computer media and economic prosperity

Computer media is conducive to economic prosperity. Many economic activities previously oriented to the local markets are now expanding their horizons to the global level. The development of information networks and the acceleration of technical progress are leading to an increase in internationally oriented services. Many organizations use electronic communication facilities such as the World Wide Web to enhance their teamwork because many individuals can simultaneously work on the same documents, hold meetings and integrate results of research at different locations. Moreover, the accumulation of capital is also enabled by networks. Capital can be invested globally in all activities via

these networks such as the IT industry, media business, agricultural production, health, education, technology, transport, trade, tourism, arts and culture, property, religion, entertainment, and sport.

Advertising and sponsorship online

Advertising is creating mass markets. Powerful forces use e-based media to influence us with their ideologies for their commercial purpose. Advertisers and other marketing actors use bulletin boards for trade and commerce. According to Vivian (2010:3), "the most obvious of the media messages designed to persuade is advertising. Organizations interact with their various constituents differently - employees, board members, customers, partners and others by using numerous media - text, graphics sound, video, etc. - into a single message."Another important aspect of the Internet-based sphere is sponsorship by businesses and organizations and support for discussion groups about issues and products that are relevant to these specific organizations. For example, sponsorship gives an opportunity for further communications and marketing.

Informatics and the global economy

In electronic society economy is electronic and global. The productivity and competitiveness of economic factors depend on their ability to effectively create, process and apply the information based on knowledge. The core of production, consumption, and circulation as well of their components (capital, manpower, raw materials, management, information, market technology) is globally organized. The productivity and competitiveness is created via a global network of interaction. Economically there is an increase of productivity and profitability as sources of wealth for any nation. In order to increase profit, expand the market, and accelerate the turnover of capital, productivity must be increased. This requires good communication skills which in turn is crucial for any success of information technologies. it is necessary to increase productivity, to expand the market and to accelerate the turnover of capital. It requires communication skills and, in turn, that enables information technology.

Capital network and computer network

A "networked society" is a society, in which, for the first time in history the basic unit of the economic organization is not the individual, the family, an enterprise or a state, but a network. A network consists of the connection of nodes and centres between multinational companies. Castells coined a new term - *metanetwork* - to describe this network of financial capital (2000:18). Capital metanetwork is intertwined with the computer-based network. Computer-based networks take many forms in today's organizations, including personal contact networks, flows of information within and between groups, strategic alliances among firms and global network organizations. It allows geographically distrib-

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uted groups to communicate interactively and simultaneously and it leads to economic progress.[1]

Democracy in e-society

The first public communication was only a one-way communication and the authorities controlled information. Mass media electronic communication changed one-way communication into a democratic two-way dialogue. In the informational-communicational revolution there is a reversible form of mass communication. In e-society the computer-based media are platforms that mediate different opinions, views, theories, options, global-projects, investigations, economics, science, tourism, marketing, but also cultural and political views. The whole community should have access to the technology of electronic networks, and be trained in how to make the best out of them, so that they have an equal opportunity to fully participate in the economic and social benefits of the information revolution.

Participartory-democratic model in e-society

Computer-based media enable autonomy (from political, economic, and military restrictions), decentralization of communications systems and openness to global communications. In e-society everyone can function independently through social interactions. Decentralization of communication system disables imposing views and opinions of a group of people and other citizens on the whole society. In contrast, computer-mediated communication allows an active communication position for all participants in the communication process, not only political leaders. The citizen in e-society is not only a recipient but also a creator of information. In such a participatory-democratic model of e-society everyone can participate in the same way.

One voice in e-society

A truly democratic society in the theoretical sense of democracy can only be established if the voice of each individual becomes part of a larger project that allows empowerment of all. Each person's voice is valuable and essential for the "critical diversity" that is needed to raise important questions, notice oppressive power relations, criticize social conditions, and reach new levels of consensus and understanding. Individuals can state opinions and request feedback to grow in social understanding. They can participate in moderated discussions in which everyone in the "audience" can "speak" and contribute to the public discussion. School, business people, professionals, workers, and researchers can conduct projects with groups from across the world. They can share their interests and problems and generate new ideas as a global team. Democracy requires responsible individuals who are prepared to subject their be-

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[1] Castells also calls the new way of capitalism as *informationalism* (2000:52).

liefs to public criticism and participate in the collective control of social life. All people with an online access have the power to enter a new social space for dialogue.

Inequality in e-society

New e-based technologies can help in employment, development of jobs, and improve job quality in some countries. They also foster an increase in political awareness, participatory democracy, mutual tolerance, and enable a more open, peaceful dialogue between the public and the elites. Today's information society brings changes, which have both benefits and disadvantages. E-society is strong and globalizing, but some parts of the population that are not privileged are excluded from the benefits it brings. People who do not have access to computers, knowledge of the Internet, and other related technological competence miss out on these opportunities to actively participate in the transformation of culture. They are not given the freedom, equality, justice, democracy, and autonomy that the Internet offers.[2] Lengel argues that, "disempowered people in disempowered places like the poor often think their voices are not adequately heard..." (2004:200).

Education by computer media

The Internet is one of our major information sources. Through computer-based media we learn almost everything we know about the world beyond our own immediate social environment. Computers have a large memory capacity and can mediate communication that "computerizes", i.e. provides in an electronic form, all selected human knowledge. This makes the work of researchers more time-effective, less costly, and allows them to invest their energy in new inventions. Less energy and resources is used on gaining old information and more energy is spent on discovering new information. On the World Wide Web the global electronic network, there are books, magazines, newspapers, and many other knowledge sources. Computers facilitate the communication between teachers, students, and parents. Students can now be tutored online by teachers from universities or schools in different countries. The Internet can be used to provide schoolwork, training courses, and other educational purposes. Chatting is also a good way to learn because students can ask questions online about things they do not know. It has been proven that computer-assisted instruction produces more learning than conventional classroom instruction.

Social globalization by networks

The mass media binds communities together by electronic correspondence and chatting. Entertainment online such as the movie, music, games, news, and

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[2] There is a marginalization of those who are illiterate in information technologies.

magazine industries also connect people by exchanging their opinions and sharing experiences. In brief, the Internet enables users to participate in a global dialogue. To cite Rehm (2004), "perhaps the greatest benefit of the Internet is the opportunity to create a widespread interchange of ideas and build far-reaching relationships among diverse people over the entire world." Electronic communication allows discourse with a large number of correspondents, over wide geographical areas, with no more effort or cost than is required to send a single message locally.

Obstacles to e-social globalization by networks
Misinterpretations
In e-society there is no voice inflection and body language so misunderstand-ings and conflict can occur. Subtle humour tends to get lost in electronic com-munication which can lead to confusion or misinterpretation. People have to make sure that the others are able to detect humour or irony. For these reasons, the e-community has developed symbols called "emotions" to indicate humour, feelings, or other grimaces. However, even if we use these, it is always safer to remind others that you are being ironic or funny. The wrong interpretation of messages can often generate unexpected angry responses called *flames*.

Redefining the community
The nature of public interests and ideas are vast and often conflicting. Because the public e-sphere is virtual it offers multiple representations of a plurality of world. The Internet simply does not have the capacity to facilitate or even allow stable societal norms.

Conclusion
Electronic communication was invented together with computers. It has been spread all across the world by the creation of the so-called World Wide Web. WWW is a global network of networks that enable the flow of messages among communicators across time and space. Computer-based communication allows for a new form of communication, which can lead to an economic and political progress, social globalization, and even improvements in education. In e-society individuals interact, exchange ideas, learn, provide social support, conduct business, play games, and even participate in politics. The problem is that in-formation systems are not equally distributed across society and some people have disadvantaged access to computers. In other words, also the e-society leads to social inequalities that include networked companies with global manpower and those of the so-called excluded population. Therefore, the question remains how to achieve a worldwide and fair access to computer-mediated communica-tion so that every country, group, and section of the population would be fully integrated this new electronic world. It is up to all of us to try to find solutions to this problem.

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