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Moderate Media Use as a Source of Rest and Better Quality Interpersonal Relationships

Abstract: The life of a young person is exposed to constant contact with various artificial aids. Young people have put smartphones at the centre of their communication. Media predators are constantly pushing their communication, imposing new needs through advertising offers. Profit-seekers are thus causing great harm to young people, which we see the consequences of in their physical and mental health, their educational underachievement and their more aggressive behaviour. This paper will point to some solutions, including achieving a more moderate use of screen media, a correct and critical use of media (social networks) and a concern for better quality interpersonal relationships.

Keywords: media, rest, relationships, health, media market

Umiarkowane korzystanie z mediów jako źródła odpoczynku i lepszej jakości relacji międzyludzkich

Streszczenie: Życie młodego człowieka narażone jest na stały kontakt z różnymi sztucznymi pomocami. Młodzi ludzie w centrum swojej komunikacji umieścili smartfony. Drapieżcy medialni nieustannie forsują ich komunikację, narzucając nowe potrzeby poprzez oferty reklamowe. Poszukiwacze zysku wyrządzają więc młodym ludziom wielką krzywdę, której skutki widzimy w ich zdrowiu fizycznym i psychicznym, słabych osiągnięciach edukacyjnych oraz bardziej agresywnych zachowaniach. W niniejszym artykule zostaną wskazane pewne rozwiązania, w tym osiągnięcie bardziej umiarkowanego korzystania z mediów ekranowych, prawidłowe i krytyczne korzystanie z mediów (portali społecznościowych) oraz troska o lepszą jakość relacji interpersonalnych.

Słowa kluczowe: media, odpoczynek, relacje, zdrowie, rynek medialny

Introduction

It's quite normal to browse on your smartphone when you're sitting at your desk and have a bit of free time, or even when you're working, when you need to stay focused, or perhaps when you're walking and driving. Smartphones fill our free time and our working time. A great deal has been said and written about screen media.

Digital media is therefore not only part of existing cultures, but is emerging as a new culture, changing language, introducing a new mentality and changing the scale of values. It is all happening on a global scale, erasing geographical distances and connecting people from all over the world through networking opportunities. These changes are also reflected in the pastoral. "Catechesis and Digital Culture," presents the positive and negative aspects of a new culture, "changing language, shaping mentalities and restructuring value hierarchies" (*Directory for Catechesis* 359).

Countless books have been published on the harms and benefits of screen media. But what none of them say is that screen media are as good or bad for us as we make them. For example, if we allow screen media to distract us constantly with the sound of messages and notifications, the logical consequence is that we will not be able to concentrate when reading a difficult text or other work that requires our concentration.

Sociologist Manuel Castells is one of those who has studied today's society from the perspective of internet use and social power. According to Castells, we live in a network society, connected in centres of power, where dominance (rules are set or prescribed) prevails on the one hand, and resistance (opposition to "imposed" rules) on the other. Within information networks, the media play an important role in the global financial market, the trans-national production system, military forces, terrorist networks, civil society and social movements (Castells 2009, 49-52).

The network society is made possible by the internet infrastructure. The average user knows very little about the Internet, and their knowledge usually stops at whether their device is connected to the web and how it can benefit them. The Internet structure is shaped by four groups or cultures: techno-meritocratic, hacker, virtual communities and technology companies (Castells 2006, 46).

Technology companies are today the most profitable. Social networks have also become a major source of profit. The more users they have, the higher their earnings can be. Apps that are offered to us for free are, of course, not. If you do not pay for the product, you are the product. In 2017, Facebook reached two billion monthly active users. The speed at which it has expanded since its inception in 2004 has outpaced the speed of development of television, cinema and radio. You Tube came second in the same year, with 1.5 billion monthly users. It was followed by WhatsApp, Messenger and Instagram. The last three apps are owned by Facebook. Facebook had a market cap of USD 445 billion in that year, making it the fifth richest company by value on the world stock exchange. English journalist John

Lanchester believes that the more Facebook grows, the more its users depend on it (Lanchester 2017, 47).

The desire for success, profit, a better life, more comfort, easier communication, participation, freedom, etc. have become the starting point for companies to get our attention. They have exploited our needs and made us dependent on them. Finding that we no longer have free time, that we are in poor spiritual, mental and physical health, that we have no peace of mind, begs the question: what is the cause of our restlessness? How have we personally adapted to the new technology? How should we use new technology so that it does not become harmful to our health (Spitzer 2021), interpersonal relationships (Pasqualetti 2018, 99–114; Pasqualetti 2020a, 101–119; Pasqualetti 2020b, 725–754), or society (Meyrowitz 1995)?

1. Coping with new technologies

The use of new technologies is inevitable. Novelty always requires us to make a certain effort to learn how to use it. Among these technologies, the use of new media has recently become the most widespread. People accept new elements in our lives differently: some are more open, others less so.

Depending on the openness to accept new technological means, Anthoni Wilhelm divides social attitudes towards new technologies into three categories: consumerist attitudes, negative attitudes (dystopia) and thno-realist attitudes. The first sees new media as a tool for achieving general progress, hence the progressive elimination of disengagement and interpersonal distance. The second, negative attitude, is characterised by a strong nostalgia for the old and a strong pessimism in the face of the future and the replacement of products by new ones. The third, techno-realistic approach sees the public discourse on technologies as a tool to create cautious and empowered users who are able to assess the advantages and disadvantages of new media (Wilhelm 2000).

From the point of view of the user, Giuseppe Mininni considers that they can be classified into four types: techno-utopists, techno-distopists, techno-utilitarians, techno-pluralists. Technoutopians see the new media as a tool of freedom and are in opposition to or transcending actual communities. Techno-dystopians are those who see the new media as a tool of oppression and control. Their use of new media is therefore regimented and controlled. For the third type, the techno-utilitarians, the new media are a tool to achieve certain goals. In this vision, the use of new media is purely instrumentalised and is linked to the possibility of achieving better goals. Techno-pluralists, on the other hand, are those who want to give new media moral autonomy and psycho-social experience. For this group, new media do not replace real face-to-face experience, but they see in it a new possible space for use (exploration) and relations (Mininni 2002, 33-34).

Everett Rogers has divided the level of attitude of new media users towards innovation into five phases: awareness, interest, evaluation, trial and adoption. In the first phase, users

discover the existence of a technological innovation but do not have detailed information. Only innovators are actually using the technology in this phase. These are people with a greater ability to cope with uncertainty, who have the technical competence and the necessary financial capacity. In the second phase, users develop an interest in novelty which leads them to seek more information. In this phase of the choice of a new technology, early adopters are the pioneers, people who are connected to social networks and play the role of opinion leaders. They are open to adopting new technology because they see its advantages. In the third phase, they are able to accept the likely consequences in the present and the future. In this stage of the choice of the idea of a new technology, the majority (early majority) anticipates the technology. Users accept the new technology only after they have carefully assessed the advantages and disadvantages. In the fourth phase, people start to use the innovation to assess its usefulness through concrete experience. In this phase of the choice of a new technology, the majority of users are latecomers (late majority). They are usually sceptical people, traditionalists with a low economic status, who approach innovations because of social pressure. In the fifth stage, the majority of the population decides to use the technological innovation. In this phase, laggards, isolated persons, sceptics, those with few social relations (only neighbours and relatives), slow to choose, those with limited economic resources are the ones to choose a new technology (Rogers 1983).

The different degrees of adaptation or acceptance of new technologies also have consequences in social life. Mothers have to balance housework, education and work, fathers struggle in the labour market, and a third of children pay a high price for digitalisation because they are visually impaired, have perceptual deficits, speech impediments, numeracy weaknesses and psychosomatic conditions (Lukas 2018, 87-88). The more advanced users of new media, who are more likely to be in the first stages in the above examples, are presumably more affluent. It is not difficult for them to spend large sums of money on novelties. However, such users are the levels most exposed to the harmful effects of the media. What are these consequences and what should be a healthy use of screen media?

2. The impact of screen-based media on health and society

Screen media can have an impact on a person's health and on society. Like anything, screen media should be used sparingly. If screen menus are not used sparingly, in the long term *lose the comma* they have an effect on our mental and physical abilities. However, completely avoiding the use of new media in any way has a negative effect.

Surprisingly, excessive use of screen media can have a negative impact on our physical passivity, reducing our reading habits for longer and more difficult texts and shrinking our vocabulary. It is much easier to sit in a comfortable seat and look at photographs than to move around actively, read a book in a concentrated way or write a scientific paper. Moreover, our face-to-face conversations on a relational level are increasingly being replaced by indirect

communication through the media (forums). The respectful expression of one's opinion and disagreement with others has been replaced by aggressive and radical words mediated through the media.

Psychologist and philosopher Manfred Spitzer critically evaluates the media. He believes that smartphones are harmful to health, lead to addiction, are a source of weight gain, cause depression and anxiety, reduce concentration and make learning more difficult. The media also influence more aggressive behaviour (Spitzer 2021, 14-15).

Berton's expressive and argument-words are the most in crisis among students today. The results of a survey on reading habits among students of humanities and social sciences education programmes in Slovenia show that students "find it increasingly difficult to express themselves precisely orally and in writing, that they are clumsy in articulating and arguing their own thoughts, that they follow the logic of random associations, and that they base their views mainly on personal experiences, which they often attribute general validity to" (Kovač et. al. 2020, 41).

At the same time, it is important to take into account the current historical situation, which also influences the use of the media. During the covid-19 pandemic, this use increased and face-to-face contact decreased. This is one of the most worrying aspects of this period, and one that concerns schools in particular. In addition, government and state officials have tried to shift all responsibility on to the schools, which has resulted in "the worst educational disaster in modern history". In the United States, there is research on school opening policies, and it points out that local institutions cheered the start of live classes, while at the same time stressing the great potential for risk and need for safety. Various studies confirm an alarming increase in student disruption, drop-out rates in colleges *not coherent – I don't understand: who has earned less? The schoolchildren? School-leavers? Everybody?* the risk of developmental delays from which children will never be able to recover, and a 42% drop-out rate. (AS 2021 28)

The media also has a positive impact insofar as it promotes the development of a person's personal qualities. More than ten years ago, Prof. Henry Jenkins argued that young people have great potential to develop their own digital competences, that they belong to a participatory culture and are highly creative in the digital field (Jenkins 2014, 60-61).

Based on a study of traditional classroom instruction, technology research and critical analysis, Jenkins identifies the following skills: Play (the acquisition of experience and problem-solving skills), Simulation (the ability to interpret and create dynamic models for the real world), Performance (the ability to embody alternative identities for improvisation and discovery), Appropriation (the ability to select and combine media content and to give it content of one's own), Multitasking (the ability to see and give attention to salient details), Distributed Knowledge (the ability to interact meaningfully with tools that expand the mind's capabilities), collective intelligence (the ability to compare different opinions with others in the light of a common goal), discernment (the ability to assess the reliability and credibility of information sources), transmedia navigation (the ability to follow the flow of history and

information across different media platforms), networking (the ability to find, synthesise and disseminate information), negotiation (the ability to navigate across different communities, to recognise and respect diversity of perspectives, to understand and follow alternative norms). This is a set of cultural competences and social skills that young people need to navigate the new media landscape. Participatory culture shifts the focus from building individual skills of expression to community participation (Jenkins 2014, 60-61).

In conclusion, extremes in the use and non-use of media are not the best way to go. The overuse of new media is harmful, as is the complete exclusion of media from our lives. On the one hand, education experts such as Buckingham note that the biggest problems are faced by education professionals, who are much less media literate than younger generations. (Buckingham 2010, 55) On the other hand, he notes the powerlessness of educational institutions due to the rapid changes in the media field.

The development of the infrastructural form of the internet has brought about societal changes. Communications expert Joshua Meyrowitz argues that new media have changed the way we access different social groups. We have allowed the new media to diminish the importance and the way in which social roles are taken into account. Changes in the media can also affect hierarchies and access to socially important figures. Media that promote attitudes of physical isolation and social inaccessibility support the mystification of hierarchy; media that discourage such attitudes have the effect of weakening many important social roles (Meyrowitz 1995, 110).

There is also a move towards greater creativity through the use of media. In 2001, Marc Prensky was the first to use the phrase Digital Natives (Prensky 2001, 1–6). This term implies a positive connotation of creativity, of inventiveness. But it is hard to confirm that new media have made people more creative. This term is inadequate. There is no doubt that some, thanks to new digital technology, have become a famous youtuber or influencer with millions of followers, but the percentage of those who achieve such success is extremely small. The question we need to ask ourselves is this: who is the master in backward-looking capitalism? Machines are always machines. The novelty of modern machines is that they are programmed by man to persuade him to change his inner attitudes and behaviour so that the goal of a certain profit is achieved, and not to satisfy man's real needs (Pasqualetti 2020b, 736).

What should be a healthy use of screen media?

3. Critical use of screen media

Empowered, responsible and critical use of screen media also requires the capacity to analyse media content and, as a consequence, to de-automate our actions. We have become accustomed to short messages and short texts that we do not fully trust, but we do not rule out that they are right. We have also become accustomed to having machines around us that do

our work for us. Not just smart phones, but also smart houses, smart cars, smart TVs, smart lights, etc. Is it really about a better quality of life for the person and the community, or is it about something else? Let us look at this problem from the point of view of new technologies and the content offered by media products.

So the first thing is technology, which can be in the hands of someone to drain us financially. Shoshana Zubolof uses the example of smart homes (the Aware Home project) to highlight the problem of surveillance capitalism. Smart homes, which do everything with the click of a phone, store personal information and sensitive data on Google's servers. They are connected in a Nest ecosystem, or a network connected to other smart devices, unknown persons and third parties. All this in order to perform predictive analytics. If a customer does not follow Nest's rules, they start to be blackmailed and may be threatened by the device. Namely, the terms of use of the smart home state that if the customer does not fully comply with the rules, the functionality and security of the device will be seriously compromised and that the possibility of updates necessary for the reliability and security of the product will be excluded. Zubolof uses this example to highlight the problem of surveillance capitalism, which appropriates human experience in order to compete with it in the marketplace (Zuboff 2019, 15-16).

The second thing is the analysis of media content, which helps us to realise that the media are not transparent, that they are not a window on the world that reflects reality, but that they are representations of the world. Buckingham presents four areas of analysis: media language, representations, production and audience (Buckingham 2020, 68-70).

Each medium consists of a combination of languages used to perform and communicate meaning (e.g. TV uses written language, audio language, visual language and moving images). To study media language is to analyse how different forms of language are used by media to convey ideas or meanings; how it is adopted and made our own; how rules are created and what happens when they are broken; how meaning is conveyed through a combination or sequence of photographs, sounds and words; how the same conventions and codes work in different types of media.

The media do not provide a transparent view of the world, but rather convey their own view of the world: they represent reality, but should not be mistaken for the reality itself. They always select and combine certain events, stories and personalities in their production, adding their own commentaries and arguments. This does not mean that their information is false or wrong (fake news). To study media representations is to study how the media proclaim the truth; whether they are real and authentic; what and whom they select, include or exclude; and with what emphasis they represent particular social groups, events or different world views.

Although some media products are produced by individuals for themselves, their friends, families and followers, most are produced solely for commercial interest. To study media production is to analyse what technologies are involved in production and distribution; what roles and types of professional work are involved; which companies buy and sell media

products; what their profits are; how media production and distribution is regulated by law; how it reaches audiences; and what are the limits to choice and control.

To study audiences means to analyse how audiences are “tagged” and measured (reach, circulation, viewership) and how media are distributed among audiences; how different social groups and individuals interpret and react to media; motivations, vulnerability to media influence and what motivates my choices whenever I am faced with a menu.

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4. Media and rest

Just as the advent of railways and road links reduced travel times, so the advent of the telegraph, radio, television and the internet reduced information times. Today, smartphones could save a lot of free time for more rest. However, social networks and virtual communities waste time that could be spent with family or other people on physical activity and spirituality.

A third of young Slovenians use smartphones regularly. Pucelj and colleagues conducted a survey of young people in Slovenia on media use. In their analysis, they present data showing that 37.7% of young people use the phone on a daily basis, 35.2% chat via instant/hip messaging (e.g. facebook, skype, viber), 29.1% send text messages, 19.3% communicate via other social networks and 4.1% via email. They note that the use of electronic media increases with age, with the exception of e-mail (Pucelj 2015, 19–28).

Smartphones help us as much as they are a tool in our lives. As soon as they are replaced by social relationships, as soon as they become a substitute for personal relationships, they start to interfere with our leisure time, with our personal rest. That is when they begin to exhaust us.

Elisabeth Lukas, a speech therapist, is convinced that 80% of all problems are related to fear. The autonomic system changes within seconds when we are mentally aroused. Muscle tension, increased pulse, blood pressure and adrenaline, the response of the stomach and digestive tract all indicate a higher nervous load. Examples triggered by psychological problems are headaches, pain in the spine and in the limbs, muscles and organs, sleep problems and a decline in vitality (Lukas 2018, 17).

Similar problems associated with screen media use are mentioned by Spitzer: myopia, anxiety, depression, attention disorders, sleep disorders, lack of exercise, overweight, poor posture, diabetes, high blood pressure, increased risk appetite in fasting and traffic, encourages casual sex - spreading sexual diseases, causes traffic accidents in traffic, impairs educational processes - increases the chance of dementia (Spitzer 2021, 19).

Only the planned use of smartphones and other screen-based media can spare us from these harmful consequences. While we cannot avoid their use in some workplaces, we can avoid them in our private lives. It is certainly not necessary to have a phone with us every step of the way.

Conclusion

The use of technology occupies our lives, whether it benefits or harms us. If we overuse smart technologies, they impair our capacity for creativity. Likewise, excessive use of screen media takes away time for relationships, physical activity and everything else that is necessary for physical, mental and spiritual health.

Depending on our enthusiasm for and use of new technological or media gadgets, experts classify us as techno-utopists, techno-dystopists, techno-utilitarians and techno-pluralists. However, when we integrate technological products into our lives, no one warns us about the safe and healthy use of these gadgets. There is therefore a need to educate and raise awareness of a good degree of criticality towards new technological tools and their contents. Behind them are often media or commercial predators who, through our inattention, are able to retrace the virtual footsteps we leave on the web. The more personal information they have, the easier it is to become a target or even a victim, blackmailed for money. In short, media predators are interested in making money, not in our personal state and well-being. While this raises ethical questions about big data and the protection of personal data, it does us no good if we do not protect ourselves and carelessly leave digital footprints on the web (Pasqualetti 2020a, 101-119).

The issue of moderate media use is quite complex. Without media, we find it harder to function in today's digital culture, because we are missing out on one part of the experience that media offers us. Certain jobs require us to work behind screens for up to 8 hours a day. These external constraints on our freedom are difficult to influence. The most we can do is to change our leisure habits. Spontaneous use of our phones, when we receive messages or when we aimlessly browse social networks, takes up most of our time and has the most negative effect on us. In the long term, such unchecked media use also affects our workload or our rest.

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