

The impact of information technology and social media

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Globalization has influenced people to interact and integrate regardless of ethnic diversities and cultural backgrounds. These interactions result from and subsequently influence international trade and political relations and interactions between nations (Wolf, 2014).

Proponents of globalization believe that it has the capacity to make the world a global village, while its opponents maintain it promotes capitalism and individualism, which is apparently a Western perspective of globalization. Wolf (2014), points that globalization has contributed to sharing and assimilation of ideologies, beliefs, and values from the West, associating this milestone to the advent of information technology.

Most recently, humans embraced the internet and the social media, which shaped their behavior. El-Aswad (2018), notes that for instance, the 21st century household is characterized by family members texting from different rooms under one roof, spending hours on earphones and typing on keyboards. Meanwhile, in the public places, people extravagantly consumer digital media and engage in constant communication. In a nutshell, as Birudavolu & Nag (2019) would put it, the modern world is driven by information and communication technology as people increasingly become afraid of being isolated and desire to be connected with like-minded people.

In this report, I take a protagonist point of view because I am not only one of the largest consumers of the IT and social media, but also revere its merits over the demerits; however, I will discuss some of its disadvantages. As the use of digital media unprecedentedly increases, this report shows, people's lives are changed. More people are connected in large sociocultural, economic, and political networks than ever before. Much of this impact is on not only the individuals, but also their states, and more so, their institutions. In addition, information technology and social media encompass both positive and negative impacts on people even as

people influence the trend. The world is growing to provide better opportunities for previously underserved communities and regions.

Outlining the influence on states and institutions

Information technology and social media has changed how people interact. At the individual level, mobile devices and the internet have brought users much closer than non-users. According to Baldwin (2016), people on Facebook are 10% more closer than the average internet users. Going beyond the group of close confidants, Baldwin (2016), shows that internet and technology users have more social ties in what is otherwise termed as parochial realm; that is, people are more connected to people in their neighborhoods, churches, workplaces, clubs, and so on compared to those who are not using any form on information technology. Moreover, people who use internet and Facebook have a higher support level (as evident in online medical fundraising campaigns). No statistics shows that people, as a result of technology and social media, barely engage in traditional face-to-face communication. Alternatively, they currently do that at a greater magnitude with options such as video chats. It is however imperative to caution that information technology and social media are still evolving. As such, it has had negative social and psychological impacts on individuals as service providers still struggle with protecting users' data.

The impact of information technology and social media has also been powerful within societies around the world. When it comes to awareness and unity creation, the internet has achieved an exponential plus (D'Costa, 2006). However, groups, communities, and institutions tend to misuse data available in the public sphere. This raises the issue of privacy. Nevertheless, people are more connected than before, what D'Costa (2006) terms as a robotic society. At the society level, the impact is evident in social, economic, and political activities. There is more

business and educational resources from which people can develop their societies. In addition, the use of internet has also influenced the innovation and creativity to establish platforms for better socialization. Today, WhatsApp is the best place to connect with family and friends: Facebook, on the other hand, is the best place to find friends (El-Aswad, 2018). People on social media contribute to address daily lives and problems, making not only artificial but also real friendships. That was not the case 15 to 20 years ago. Mobiles and computers and all internet platforms are making it possible for communities all over the world to come together. In fact, El-Aswad (2018), notes that people are investing more on IT as it is integrated into their emotions and daily activities. The only challenge is that artificial intelligence could replace human intelligence. Nevertheless, recent developments show that both systems complement each other.

More and more people are establishing corporations across nations as a result of modern technology. According to Rahman (2013), ICT has made tremendous progress in ensuring multinational corporations manage their resources around the world. These new modes of communication also attract the youth, who comprise 75 percent of the world population (Rahman, 2013). With Skype, WhatsApp, and other media, governments and institutions are able to access their stakeholders easily at a time when the traditional means of communication seem outdated and expensive. It is however imperative to point that in a society guided by traditions and religious values such as the UAE, people interacted via more formal and direct contact. ICT has changed that narrative. The popularity of modern modes of communication is common among the youth in the UAE. A report by the Center of Decision Making and Support of Dubai Police presented results on the impact of foreign cultures among UAE youth. The study revealed that a substantial section of the adolescents have copied the Western life, especially in terms of clothing, haircuts, and language (El-Aswad, 2018). Technology has also had an impact on

national and religious events such as Ramadan allowing Muslims across nations to share spiritual messages.

Thanks to wikis that information sharing has become profound. Wiki is an online tool for updating and publishing content collaboratively (Zheng et al., 2015). People with access can edit content via an ordinary web browser in what is otherwise known as collaborative authoring.

Among the most beneficiaries of Wikis are schools. Over the last years, the concept of Web 2.0 developed to open new doors for information sharing and foster student reflection during a learning process (Biasutti & Heba, 2012). For instance, through weblogs, verbalizing their thoughts online not only portrays but also initiates reflection process, leading other learners to think about and assimilate learning content. Learners can comment and edit entries thereby participating in constructive discussions (Zheng et al., 2015). This initiates active cognitive and metacognitive processes that promote deep learning. Especially in mathematics, wikis are used in collaboration and knowledge sharing of mathematical projects. According to Duffy & Bruns (2006), wikis are used for ongoing documentation of students' work, building their annotated content and collaboration, and linking them to network resources. Other scholars in education support that wiki spaces improve writing skills, communication, and student commitment (Himplsl, 2007). For Himplsl (2007), wikis promote information collection, processing, and sharing. Wikis allow students to share blogs, videos, and podcasts on social, economic, environmental, and political issues that affect their world.

Wikis have also improved information sharing between organizations. The most notable institutions that effectively use wikis include Disney Corporation, New York Times, IBM, Lufthansa, Motorola, and Dresdner Kleinwort Wasserstein (Zheng et al., 2015). For instance, Disney's information sharing strategy involves integrating wikis into internal blogs and RSS

feeds to promote internal discussion and facilitation. Meanwhile, investment bank Dresdner Kleinwort Wasserstein, leverages wikis to empower geographically dispersed people to publish information, collaborate, track project development, reduce the number of emails (most of which end up in the trash section), gather ideas for new system development, and track product reviews (Rajagopal, 2009). Other institutions basically use wiki-like features to optimize information and knowledge sharing. According to Rajagopal (2009), platform such as Wikipedia is highly used to support collaborative efforts because of its updatability. As such, wiki-like software like Confluence and Socialtext are given much attention by entrepreneurs as they offer improve, user-friendly interface that come with wiki capabilities. Furthermore, online communication is making businesses to connect and interact. The internet is adding value to businesses by allowing entrepreneurs to share life experiences and corporate values. More so, they are able to share about and how to eliminate geographical barriers to business. Organizations, for instance in the health industry continue to inspire each other. The result is breaking of archaic superstition, conservatism, and cultural egos as evident at the state level.

Today, states are adopting better ways of collaborating and sharing information with their citizens through technological transformation. For example, over the past two decades, Dubai has demonstrated the willingness to undertake numerous digital transformation initiatives driven by public acceptance along with the adoption of ICT in all facets of life (Küng, 2005). Accordingly, Dubai began its ICT journey in 1999 having announced its inaugural ICT strategy. Birudavolu & Nag (2019) show that Dubai successively launched the Dubai Internet City, the Dubai eGovernment, the Dubai Smart Government, and later in 2014, the Smart Dubai initiative. Currently, with more than 2.5 million people living in the city, Dubai is one of the seven Emirates in the UAE with the highest ICT adoption in the region, by not only the public but also

the government (Birudavolu & Nag, 2019). As a result, the Emirate has pioneered exceptional life quality and an unmatched corporate environment. Individuals, businesses, and the government are able to collaborate and share information mainly on security and investment by harnessing digital innovation in all their endeavors. For example, in 2016, the government launched Smart Dubai 2021 to allow government, corporate, and individual interaction on products/services and experiences. In simple terms, wikis have created both producers and consumers of information to promote the national agenda to make Dubai the happiest city in the world.

Evaluation of the positive and negative impacts of the digital age on people

Evidently, new media connects people in ways that were never possible before. As Rahman (2013) puts it, it has allowed people to maintain friendships and networks beyond time and distance. Individuals who were previously isolated can connect with like-minded people. Most importantly, new media has facilitated interaction across diverse sociocultural, economic, ideological, political, and religious boundaries (Baldwin, 2016). Social media helps to deepen relationships and support the formation of both personal and professional networks. For instance, Küng (2015), shows that 68% of teenagers on social media have received support when undergoing social and economic issues. More so, American adults who use digital media report less stress levels than those who are not using any form of media (Küng, 2015).

Originally, the media focused mainly on informing the public on particular subjects. Today, the new media helps amplify human responses to humanitarian crises across the world. For example, during the Arab Spring of 2011/12, digital media played an imperative role in resource mobilization, protest organization, and drawing global attention to the event (Baldwin, 2016). Baldwin (2016), reports that up to 2 million dollars was collected in two days by digital

media users to support the 2015 earthquake victims in Nepal. Meanwhile, Google Maps and Facebook groups played a significant role in directing refugees fleeing from the Syrian war to plan routes and evade human traffickers (El-Aswad, 2018).

What is more, new media enables people to share information. Thanks to wikis that information sharing has become profound. Overall, digital media allows people to have profound access to data and facts, enabling information to circulate faster. D'Costa (2006), points that with new media, response to information has subsequently improved. This not only allows people to respond immediately as events unfold, but also expose workplace injustices, corruption, and unfair business practices around the world (El-Aswad, 2018). For instance, when workers' rights are violated, pharmaceutical companies attempt to raise the price of drugs, or governments oppress their citizens, new media facilitates the spread of that information, forcing perpetrators to reverse their direction.

However, there are significant disadvantages associated with the digital age of globalization. One of the most cited dangers by scholars is internet addiction. Clearly, the internet is the 21st century television, which Rajagopal (2009), refers to as an electronic drug. For instance, in the UAE, nearly 70% of students spend up to 5 hours on social media; 57% of them unsuccessfully attempted to quit (El-Aswad, 2018). Similar to any form of addiction, internet addiction is characterized by tolerance, withdrawal symptoms, antisocial issues, behavioral issues, and poor cognitive abilities (Rajagopal, 2009).

Furthermore, the new media raises issues of social and personal safety. Foremost, the social media comprises of inappropriate material accessible to children. D'Costa (2009), argues that children have access to copious content on sex and hacking, for example, which pollutes their morality. Some children end up as victims of cyberbullying. Meanwhile, privacy and

internet security remains a major concern for governments across the world. When using apps, 90% of them ask for private permissions such as access to Facebook account, photos, contact, besides private other data; without these, one is not able to use those apps (Baldwin, 2016).

However, the biggest threat is to the banking sector. When their systems are hacked, people lose significant amount of money. Governments are neither safe as hackers have repeatedly shut down crucial government websites. In the race for the highest office in America between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, Russia was, for instance, accused of hacking the electoral system to manipulate the results in favor of Donald Trump (Birudavolu & Nag, 2019). This shows that not only individuals but also corporations and governments are at risk of malicious use of their data. With the new media, no one is safe.

From a social perspective, the new media has eroded emotional attachment when addressing sensitive matters. Originally, when a lecturer had an issue to address with his or her student, he or she would sermon them to their office, sit across a desk and talk about it. Today, both email messages while riding in a taxi or lying in their beds. For one thing, research shows that people tend to respond to their emails later especially when they feel they do not have a good answer to present (Baldwin, 2016). D'Costa (2009), equates this to being asked a question and rather than presenting a response, one chooses to go silent. In a nutshell, the digital age raises the issue of etiquette and emotional visibility. As Rahman (2013) explains, people on the internet have a penchant for saying things they would never say to people in person because of the physical distance between the two of them. It is like the use of electronic system inhibits the sympathetic nervous system in the brain, which is responsible for emotional controlling emotions (Birudavolu & Nag, 2019).

Connectedness of people via the new media

The internet has created a global village, but its effects can destroy the positive vision of a globalized society. According to D'Costa (2009), the internet has reduced the world into a global village by allowing people to communicate easily and fast. It has altered the conventional ways of purchasing and selling of products and services, besides other commercial activities. For example, the term eCommerce was developed to imply the conclusion of business contracts via electronic media, and without a doubt, the concept is growing. In Europe, research shows that most countries are developing their internal eCommerce market as the number of eShoppers increasingly use internet services to purchase products and services (Küng, 2015). Küng (2015), reveals that Germany, France, U.K., and Norway have the highest percentage of people between 16 and 74 years old that order products and services online.

New media also enables the creation of communities to voice their actions in unison. Individuals and institutions take advantage of the cyberspace to promote online petitions and charities. For example, change.org helps people to start petitions and advance their cause. As a result, more than 123 million users in 196 countries have attained their goals in addressing nearly 15000 socioeconomic, environmental, and political issues (El-Aswad, 2018). Another website, avaaz.org, on the other hand, has become a community of people who take action to address international, regional, national, and local problems, including corruption, poverty, conflict, and climate change (Birudavolu & Nag, 2019). Platform such as refugee-action.org.uk also helps refugees fleeing to Europe to coordinate their movement and settlement in the new countries.

With the digital age, the world has become so small that people are able to trace where others have been and how they got there. Rahman (2013) points that this phenomenon is changing the nature of workplace relationship. Today, with the proliferation of multinational corporations, people can work from anywhere in the world (Rahman, 2013). This is made

possible with digital data, high-speed internet, and quality audio/video technology. According to Rahman (2013), up to 46% of internet users who are employed express high job satisfaction and productivity when using digital devices and tools. Meanwhile, 39% of companies have flexible working hours by allowing their employees to work and attend virtual meetings over the internet. This has transformed not only the workplace but also education through virtual classes (Biasutti & Heba, 2012).

The downside of the new media is the disintegration of cultures through propaganda, comparison, hate, and comparison that grows faster with the internet. The internet allows many people to speak more than they can listen (El-Aswad, 2018). This curtails the power of critical analysis of events, which is the biggest challenge to establishing a global village. The new media further creates an environment where people mainly relate with their online peers than neighbors. Evidently, the internet has become the main source of fundraising for social and environmental development. In spreading propaganda and hate speech, the new media deserves an Oscar Award. Politicians, terrorists, and radicals take advantage of the internet to spread individualism, safety dilemmas, and negative information that bring divisions among individuals, communities, and nations.

Conclusion

In sum, globalization has been advanced by the use of the information technology and social media. Evidently, it has shrunk the world and brought people closer together. People, corporations, and governments not only have the opportunity to share information but also utilize that information for research and development. Even so, the internet threatens to push people further apart. Communal communication is getting weaker and weaker while aggression and

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individualism increase to threaten the existence of humanity. Similar to any tool available for human use, the benefits of the internet can only be derived from exercising good judgment.

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