

Modern Technologies and Human Relations

Yahya R. Kamalipour*

Department of Communication and director of the Center for Global Studies, Purdue University Calumet, USA

All media work us over completely.... Any understanding of social and cultural change is impossible without a knowledge of the way media work as environments.

--Marshall McLuhan, 1967

A vast array of new telecommunication technologies is forging a new global environment based upon the collision of television, telephone, satellite, and computer. The main reason for the emergence and popularity of these technologies is that they serve a multitude of financial and political interests. Although the general population seems fascinated merely by the technological devices, per se, the end result will be cultural change.

We live in a dense combination of communicative networks. Living in this hyper high-tech environment, we often fail to examine ourselves and our environment critically. Communication technologies, especially the new social media, have made it possible, for all of us, especially for those in power, to transmit ideas and information to billions of people around the world simultaneously and instantaneously. For the first time in human history, these technologies have connected all parts of our globe together electronically, yet ironically we often feel disconnected from one another. We are constantly texting and chatting, amassing hundreds of virtual friends, posting photos and video clips online, while ignoring the real persons next to us!

To put a spin on an Alvin Toffler statement, the social media have magnified the very process by which we "try on" and "create" our real and virtual images. They make it possible for us to project our images electronically, via Facebook, Myspace, Blogs, LinkedIn, and Youtube, to the world. Yet nobody fully understands what all this will do to our self-worth, psyches, and personalities. For in no previous civilization have we ever had such powerful communication tools at our finger tips around the clock and in any space.

We are overwhelmed by the sheer wealth of information and are increasingly hampered by the lack of education in media literacy or in understanding the complexity of our media-rich environment. News comes to us twenty-four hours a day, from all corners of the world, over a variety of media, especially the Internet, satellites, and smart phones. Yet we often absorb it the same way that our ancestors listened to the town criers, without paying much attention to its form, content, message, meaning, and source. For instance, few are aware of how a blogger's account of a demonstration in Egypt's Tahrir Square might differ from the Al-Jazeera TV, New York Times, or CNN reports on the same event.

These implications have prompted new concerns, generally referred to as "information explosion," "information implosion," "information anxiety," and "information overload." Indeed, the telecommunication technologies have significantly altered the overall structure of the traditional media as well as the overall social, political, and economic structure of American society and, indeed, of the entire world.

Information has become a valued commodity much like automobiles, arms, petroleum, crops, and other tangible products. Consequently, in today's media-rich and highly competitive global environment, information-war and image-war have become powerful media and persuasive strategies for gaining influence in domestic, national and global affairs. Moreover, we are often inclined to be impressed merely by the physical and entertainment aspects of the new technologies without thinking about their immense impact on our minds, emotions, families, relationships, and culture.

Are we communicating better? Do we understand one another better? Are we getting along with one another better? Are we resolving our differences easier? Are we more tolerant of our differences (race, color, nationality, sex, religion, values, and beliefs)? Are we happier with our private lives or with ourselves? Are we happier with our jobs? Are we freer? Are we happier with our national and international politics or our politicians? Are our children going to have a better future? Are we content with the status of our global environment vis-à-vis air pollution, water pollution, deforestation, ozone depletion, and contamination?

Technological advancement is only the first step in a long and complicated journey toward a practical reality of a better world. To arrive at such a world, we must continue to probe the questions raised and rise above the glitter and excitement of our hi-tech gadgetry world. We need to focus our attention on ourselves, on the next generations, on our relationships, on our fundamental human values, on the plight of humanity, and on the sorry state of our global environment. Capitalizing on our human ingenuity and creativity, we must collectively and urgently devise reasonable and workable solutions for the myriad of problems plaguing our present world in order to build a better one.

*Corresponding author: Yahya R. Kamalipour, PhD, Head of the Department of Communication and Director of the Center for Global Studies, Purdue University Calumet, USA, Tel: 219-989-2393; Fax: 219-989-2008; E-mail: ykamalip@purdue.edu

Received December 23, 2011; Accepted December 23, 2011; Published December 23, 2011

Citation: Kamalipour YR (2011) Modern Technologies and Human Relations. J Mass Communicat Journalism 1:e102. doi:10.4172/2165-7912.1000e102

Copyright: © 2011 Kamalipour YR. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.