

THE INTERNET AND SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

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Abstract

The Internet as a worldwide commonly available web is an important tool of social communication. Worldwide range, interactivity, use of multimedia, mediation of different languages – these features make the Internet so popular. In this paper the author presents the basic services provided through the Internet, which transform the net into the common medium of communication. Gathered statistics show increasing role of the Internet in social communication.

Key words: the Internet, social communication, medium of communication.

1 Introduction

Inclinations to communicate with others are a natural thing, which accompanies human being since his/her birth. Social communication is the oldest system of communication. Media of social communication have been changing for ages. Technical inventions entail changes of communication forms. According to McLuhan, theoretician of mass communication, we can distinguish four eras – turning points in the history of communicational inventions. In tribal era – dominant role in communication plays acoustics (sense of hearing, touch), in writing era - sense of vision, in print era and electronic era - sense of hearing, vision, touch etc.¹ New electronic media including Internet changed significantly the way people communicate, what they think, what they do and how they act. Form and nature of social communication are also overcoming great changes. World wide range, interactivity, use of multimedia and speed are the determinants of social communication in the electronic era.

2 Essence of social communication

Social communication is a process of creating, transforming and transferring information from one source (people, groups and social organizations) to another.² According to Wincenty Okoń basic model of communication consists in situation where “two partners, one of them transmits information (coding and emission), the other one – receives the hidden message (reception) and read it (decoding)”.³ Communication is a process known to everybody since the beginning of his/her existence. Since birthday baby communicates with others through gestures, mimics, shout, words, signs and symbols. Communication is determined by the following features:

- It is a continuous process, which applies to human life since birth to death,

¹ McLuhan E., Zingrone F. (red.): *Wybór tekstów*, Wydawnictwo Zys i S-ka, Poznań 2001 [za:] E. Griffin: *Podstawy komunikacji społecznej*, Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, Gdańsk 2003, s. 343. ISBN 83-89120-14-3.

² www.wiem.pl – Portal Wiedzy Onet.pl

³ Okoń W.: *Nowy słownik pedagogiczny*, Wydawnictwa Akademickie „Żak”, Warszawa 2001, s. 177. ISBN 83-88149-41-5

- It is a specific social process, it applies to at least two people and always proceeds in social environment,
- It is a creative process, it lies in building new concepts and learning about world around us,
- It is a symbolic process, it employs symbols and signs,
- It is an interactive process, where the relationships amongst its participants are being formed,
- It is an inevitable process, that is „nobody is able not to communicate“,
- It is an irreversible process, it cannot be reverted, repeated, nobody can change its proceeding.⁴

As the years went by, ways, possibilities, range and tools of communications have been changed. Nowadays the Internet as a commonly accessible world wide web is an important tool of social communication.

3 The Internet as a communications tool

GFK Net Index Report finds, that in Poland there are 17,3 internauts aged between 15-75 (58% of people in that age group) and most of them – 91% uses the Internet at least once a week, 59% - everyday.⁵ According to GUS access to the Internet has 93% of Polish enterprises, 28% of employees regular uses the Internet. Access and use of the Internet reports 47,6% of households.⁶ The Internet, thanks to its great popularity, became a new organisational tool of social communication. The Internet is supposed to offer the greatest opportunities in communication.⁷ The most popular services in this field include: www (world wide web), e-mail, internet communicators, chats and discussion groups, internet telephony, video-chats, blogs. WWW is the most developed service, which turns the Internet into the widespread medium of communication. According to the GUS report mentioned above, in 2008 most companies kept their own www website:

- small enterprises (10-49 employees) – 50,1 %,
- medium enterprises (50-249 employees) – 77,1 %,
- large enterprises (250 and more employees) – 88,1%.

Such optimistic performance of enterprises unfortunately does not transpose to education. Most schools have their own websites but teachers do not use this form of conveying information very often.

According to findings of E. Sałata almost 44% of teachers have difficulty in putting materials in the Internet.⁸ The Internet is used as communications tool by users from

⁴ Dobek-Ostrowska B.: *Podstawy komunikowania społecznego*. Wydawnictwo ASTRUM, Wrocław 2007, s. 14. ISBN 978-83-7249-091-9.

⁵ www.internetstats.pl

⁶ www.statgov.pl

⁷ Raczyńska M.: *Internet – nowy środek komunikacji* [w:] E. Sałata, St. Ośko (red.): *Współczesne problemy pedeutologii i edukacji*, Wydawnictwo Instytutu Technologii Eksploatacji – Państwowy Instytut Badawczy, Radom 2007, s. 301. ISBN 978-83-7204-649-9.

⁸ Sałata E.: *Kompetencje informatyczne nauczycieli we współczesnej szkole* [w:] W. Furmanek, A. Piecuch, W. Walat (red.): *Technika-Informatyka-edukacja. Teoretyczne i praktyczne problemy edukacji informatycznej*, Wydawnictwo Oświatowe FOSZE, Rzeszów 2005, s. 157. ISBN 83-88845-55-1.

different age groups. Table 1 shows the structure of Internet use for communication purposes.

Table 1. Use of the Internet for communication purposes.

Services	Total %	Age group					
		16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74
Persons, who have been using the Internet for the specific purpose for the last three years:	49,0	88,7	70,6	55,7	38,6	22,0	5,9
- Using of Internet communicators	28,4	70,4	46,2	24,4	14,5	6,4	1,4
- Participation in chats and discussion groups	15,8	44,2	24,9	12,4	6,4	2,4	0,4
- Using of Internet telephony	14,8	27,2	25,8	15,3	9,1	5,5	2,8
- Video chats by using of Internet camera	9,6	18,1	17,1	9,5	6,5	3,0	1,4
- Reading of Internet diaries (blogs)	6,6	19,6	9,0	4,5	2,3	2,3	0,4
- Creating and running own blog	1,0	4,0	0,8	0,8	0,2	0,2	0,1
- Others	14,4	11,6	16,3	22,7	17,8	11,5	2,5

Source: Own description on the basis of GUS 2008 statistics: www.stat.gov.pl/gus

As we can see in the statistics above using of Internet communicators, participation in chats and discussion groups and phoning through the Internet are the main web services enjoyed by the young for the most part. It is more and more common to replace the other forms of communication by Internet telephony (Table 2).

Table 2. Replacing the other forms of communication by Internet telephony (Table 2).

Services	Total %	Age groups					
		16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74
1. Persons using Internet telephony or Internet video chats	17,3	32,1	29,4	18,1	11,2	6,2	2,9
– phoning by the mobile phone	11,6	22,9	19,7	11,7	7,5	3,8	1,7
– phoning by the stationary phone	11,9	23,2	19,6	12,1	8,1	3,8	1,6
– mailing	10,9	22,5	18,9	10,6	6,1	3,5	1,1
2. Persons who report lack of impact on the above and other communication forms	1,2	1,7	2,1	1,9	0,7	0,4	0,4

Source: Own description on the basis of GUS 2008 statistics: www.stat.gov.pl/gus

As we can see only insignificant part of users (1,2%) reports lack of influence of Internet telephony on the different forms of communication.

4 Summary

Having studied use of the Internet in the social communication process, we find that the Net is displacing the traditional form of communication from day to day. The Internet becomes common medium of communication. This is a medium, which regardless of skin colour, age, education, place of residence gives equal opportunities to communicate to its users. The potencial of the Internet inspires respect and admiration but also brings about dangers and anxiety. We should remember, that the reception of information can be deformed by a number of factors.⁹ The latter field requires independent interest.

5 Bibliography

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⁹ VARKOLY L. *Niektóre moderné aplikácie informačných technológií* [w:] *Informatyka w dobie XXI wieku*. A. Jastriebow [red.], Radom 2008, s. 196.