

The Interaction of Smartphones and the Internet

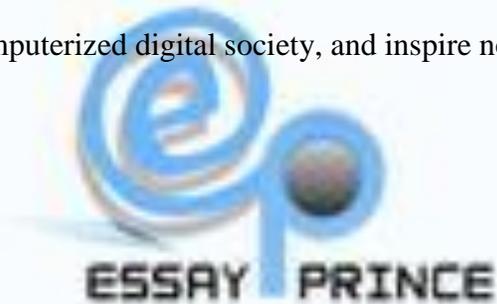
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Abstract

The paper provides an in-depth critical evaluation of peer-reviewed literature on how the Smartphone interacts with the internet in the contemporary society. Based on recent empirical evidence, smartphones have significantly transformed the modern society towards being mobile, globalised, interactive, and socially remote/isolated network of communities and individuals. From the perspective of the mass communication, as the paper argues, the Smartphone advanced the achievements of the personal computer in engraving the internet to the modern society. The interaction helped add the social media to popular mass media options, create a transforming addiction in the modern organization or workplace, creating a globalized society, enable a computerized digital society, and inspire novel social, cultural, economic, and health realities.



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The Interaction of Smartphones and the Internet: Literature-Based Research Paper

INTRODUCTION

This paper provides an in-depth evaluation of peer-reviewed literature on how the Smartphone interacts with the internet in the contemporary society. Primarily focusing on recent empirical evidence, the research paper establishes how the Smartphone has significantly transformed the modern society towards being mobile, globalised, interactive, and socially remote/isolated network of communities and individuals. Adopting a unique perspective of the mass communication field, the research paper asserts how the Smartphone advanced the achievements of the personal computer in engraving the internet to the modern society. The Smartphone as it emerged from the review that follows, made the internet personal, mobile-friendly, liberal, and a basic need of the Information Age. Importantly, as the research paper established hereafter, the available knowledge and published literature concurs on five distinct themes on the interaction of Smartphones and the internet, namely:

- a) Adding the social media to popular mass media options
- b) Creating an addiction of Smartphones in the modern organization/workplace
- c) Creating a globalized society
- d) Enabling computerized digital society
- e) Nursing novel social, cultural, economic, and health realities

CONTEMPORARY INTERNET USAGE AND THE SMARTPHONES

Smartphones and the Age of the Social Media

One of the most dominant themes on the interaction of smartphones and the internet is how smartphones transformed the traditional mass media by the creation and consolidation of a

novel/new social-media edge. According to Tossell et al. (2015), traditional media often relied on static communication technology/means/devices, until mobile communication (optimized by the smartphone) became feasible. The result of advanced technology, the social media made individuals constantly connected to the world via the internet (Woolley, 2013).

The social media used the internet to help isolated individuals maintain effective communication with the globe to the extent even scholarship became globalised despite the lack of “full cultural immersion,” as investigated by Woolley (2013, p. 36). While social interaction used to be personalized (face-to-face), scholars and researchers now conclude that the Smartphone created a convenient and indirect communication while “on the go” among people who share little cultural, geographic, religious, and economic identities (Woolley, 2013). This argument creates the foundation for all the other themes reviewed hereafter, including globalization, connected workplaces, and digitalization.

Smartphones’ Addiction and a Connected Workplace

It also accrues that smartphones are now progressively “changing organizational behavior” and by so doing “transforming the future” of the formal workplace (Pitichat, 2013, p. 1). Pitichat (2013) established that the Smartphone has transformed contemporary organization behaviors after its introduction to the workplace. Pitichat (2013) argued that Smartphones “increasingly integrated with people’s lives not only for social use, but for professional use as well” (p. 1), making them not only convenient for the social media, but also for professional careers. The integration of the Smartphone in the formal workplace has positively increased operational efficiency of organizations,” which explains why Pitichat (2013) recommends that corporate leaders and CEOs to encourage the use of Smartphones by employees. The 3 benefits

Pitichat (2013) ascribes to Smartphones in the workplace include strengthening peer and supervisor relationships, promoting individual autonomy, and improving collaboration and sharing of knowledge during work (p. 1).

As Pitichat (2013) concludes that “integrating the use of Smartphones in the workplace” is unavoidable and necessary for modern organizations, other scholars predict a long-term implication. Tossell et al. (2015) concurs that, indeed, Smartphones have become an addiction for many employees today. Tossell et al. (2015) investigated the phenomenon of addiction among Smartphone users in a yearlong study, 62% of whom admitted to be addicts. The addicted Smartphone users dedicated twice the normal amount of time on mobile apps in the Smartphones, most notably internet mail, instant messaging, the World Wide Web, and Facebook/Twitter/Instagram accounts.

Although this addicted-Smartphone users did not play internet games above the rate of non-addicts, they spent far much and uncontrolled “time-per-interaction” on the four forelisted applications in their Smartphones (Tossell et al., 2015, p. 37). Contextualizing these Smartphone addicts in the workplace can deductively suggest that most employees in the organization will spend far much time than the traditional workers, not being productive and creative for their organizations, but being on the internet. According to Tossell et al. (2015), some addicted smartphone user voiced how their usage of the smartphone was “problematic” even to him as an individual, and by implication, the employing organization (p. 37). What Pitichat (2013) and Tossell et al. (2015) establish how the Smartphone’s internet-access ability has transformed the traditional formal workplace to a point of become mandatorily essential (Pitichat, 2013) and addictive (Tossell et al., 2015).

Internet as a Platform for Globalised on a Smartphone

What the foregoing studies all concur with, among them Woolley (2013), Pitichat (2013), and Tossell et al. (2015), is the onset of a novel communication age, the Information Age. This is the age where digital communication has transformed the traditional segmented and divisive world into a global village. Using a simple smartphone, two people can talk, exchange notes, share pictures, record videos, and collaborate in a project when residing in different continents, almost the same way that roommates used can. What the smartphone used the internet to do was digitalize the globe, across the traditional cultural, social, economic, demographic, and regional profiles barriers. In essence, therefore, Smartphone's mobile communication has helped network the globe into a village (Park, 2015). Courtesy of the internet, Smartphone have made regions become irrelevant and insignificant, since as Park (2015) concurs, "my whole world's in my palm" with an internet-enabled Smartphone (p. 1). After investigating the behaviors of 552 teenagers, Park (2015) established that the only disparities among the networked teenagers using Smartphones was not territorial or regional, but largely determined by the economic potential of their parents.

In their recent study, Mascheroni and Olafsson (2015) investigated how the internet-enabled Smartphone has transformed the society for European children today. Published in the *New Media & Society* journal, Mascheroni and Olafsson (2015) analyzed the primary survey data (from Net Children Go Mobile) collected from 3,500 children and teenagers aged between 9 and 16 years in the UK, Denmark, Belgium, Italy, Romania, and Portugal. Their primary purpose was to determine the extent to which "diffusion of smartphones among children" has influenced the globalised digitalization through the internet (p. 1). According to the study, "the adoption of smartphones among children" highlights the digital inequality across Europe, where the more

access to the internet the children have, the better opportunities they get (p. 1). What is important about the study, however, is that according to Mascheroni and Olafsson (2015), being able to access the internet using the Smartphone, significantly determined the status, potential, and future of European children. In other words, the world has become a global village, where using the internet, the ability to use a Smartphone determines the fate of European children.

Smartphones' Computerized Mobility for a Digitalized Society

Globalization of trade, politics, culture, and social profiles though differing in scope, share a common background of digital communication. The European children researched by Mascheroni and Olafsson (2015), and the teenagers investigated by Park (2015), have become citizens of a globalised village where nationality and regions are insignificantly influential. This is a direct consequence of having smartphones with which to access the internet, and thus share on opportunities availed across the globe. In question here is what Humphreys, Von Pape and Karnowski (2013) qualify as the progressively “evolving mobile media” where the Smartphone has gained a unique role for the modern society to access “the mobile internet” (p. 491).

Derived from the foregoing argument therefore, is that the globe has become digitalized. Communication (Park, 2015), education (Woolley, 2013), employment (Pitichat, 2013) and commerce (Tossell et al., 2015) among many other facets of contemporary societies have all become possible because the world embraced the onset of the personal computer. The internet was first used to network computers within the office setup, gradually regionally, and ultimately globally. When the personal computer became a norm even at homes and in academic institutions, the internet became a feasibility. What however redefined the age of the internet was the Smartphone's offer of the mobile internet (Humphreys, Von Pape & Karnowski, 2013). The

Smartphone came, offered the same computer-digitalized capabilities, and integrated with advanced mobile communication (Donner, Gitau, & Marsden, 2011). The result was an unprecedented age of computerized communication that was digitalized for infinite mobility and convenience.

It thus accrues that the Smartphone enabled mobility, convenience, and affordability of computerized functions for a digitalized society, for communication, education, social interaction etc. Two scholars, nonetheless, Ling (2012) and Lundquist, Lefebvre and Garramone (2014) help consolidate this argument. Ling's (2012) evidence-based argument asserted that, "the Internet has allowed us to broaden our social world into a virtual friend-net," and the Smartphone provides "an instrument of a more intimate social sphere" (p. 14). According to Ling (2012), what is easily taken for granted to day ('for grantedness'), is Smartphone's ability in "embedding of mobile communication into society" through the internet (p. 9). On their part, Lundquist, Lefebvre and Garramone (2014) facilitated focus groups among college students to investigate their "perceptions and attitudes" of the Smartphone technology. In their findings, the researchers concluded that, "Smartphones fulfill the demand for immediate access to social worlds," thus explaining their need of "being in the loop keeps them attached to their devices" (p. 80).

Social and Health Impact of Connected Smartphones

The final common theme on how the Smartphone interacts with the internet in the contemporary society, merges health, social, economic, and cultural impacts that Smartphones have used the internet to impose. Sarwar and Soomro (2013) researched the "impact of Smartphones on society," specifically focusing on their ability "to transform the culture, social life, technology landscape and other diverse aspects of modern society" (p. 216). Their findings concluded that, courtesy of the internet, smartphones are now playing a critical role in the health

sectors, business, human psychology, education, and every social aspect of modern lifestyles. This argument concurs with many other scholars and researchers. Among these studies, include Zamfiroiu, Herteliu and Vintila (2012) who established that the mobile applications in Smartphones have now redefined human interaction, primarily using mobile multimedia communication.

Despite these many advantages of the smartphone-enabled internet use, as highlighted above, several research studies have identified likely health impacts of the Smartphones, most of them being negative. Ward et al. (2017) reviewed two experimental studies and concluded that having and using a Smartphone gradually reduces the “available cognitive capacity” of an individual, resulting to a “smartphone-induced brain drain” (p. 140). Gao et al. (2016) linked smartphone usage with increased the level loneliness and triggered social anxiety since they enable distance and non-face to face communication. The findings agree with those generated by Bian and Leung (2015) who linked Smartphone usage to increased shyness and loneliness, and thus indirectly delimits the social capital that traditionally relied on personalized interactions. Indeed, according to a study conducted by Rotondia, Stanca and Tomasuolo (2017), Smartphone usage maintains connectedness among people although they remain alone and isolated, thus gradually delimiting their well being and potential for social interactions.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing sections provided an evidence-based evaluation of how the Smartphone interacts with the internet in the contemporary society. From the discussion, it is evident that the Smartphone has significantly transformed the modern society towards being mobile, globalised, interactive, and socially remote/isolated. Today, the Smartphone has interacted with the internet to add the social media to popular mass media options, create an addiction in the modern

workplace, create a globalized society, enable a computerized digital society, and inspire novel social, cultural, economic, and health realities.



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