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Research paper

Emotions and 21st Century Communication

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Abstract

Electronic Media is no more a buzz word now. Almost every educated and semi-educated person all over the world is a part of digital media and access information electronically. Affordable smart phones, electronic gadgets and telecommunication services have made communication fast and multimedia-rich containing text, images, audio-video and animation messages. In this 21st century, digital media has given a democratic opportunity to all of us to become a broadcaster. People discuss online about issues of considerable importance and as well as trivial matters. This online platform has brought out many changes in personality and thoughts of its users and especially of the coming generation. Sharing confidential information and being accessible 24X7 has brought out changes in behavior and mannerism of new generation. New generation has become more expressive and communicate more than earlier generation. They are connected to more and diverse set of people all at once and every time. Communication which is always based on emotions has changed in current scenario which is the theme of this paper.

Keywords: *21st century communication; Emotional Intelligence; Emotions and Social Media; New Media Communication*

1. Introduction

Communication is designed keeping in mind the emotions of the recipient and its design depends upon the emotions of communication designer as well. Emotions arise in the brain and different neurotransmitters are associated with different emotions. Emotion are triggered as a release of these neurotransmitters in response to a stimulus, where mood can be seen as a result of naturally changing levels of these chemicals. The stronger our reaction to a stimulus, the more neurotransmitters are released and the bigger our reaction becomes. Emotion has a huge effect on our motivation. [SEOPressor Blog (2017)] New technologies, whether text message or telegraph, inevitably raise questions about emotion. New forms of communication bring with them both fear and hope, on one hand allowing us deeper emotional connections and the ability to forge global communities, while on the other prompting anxieties about isolation and over-stimulation. Recent researches explore the historical roots of much of our recent understanding of mediated feelings, showing how earlier ideas about the telegraph, phonograph, radio, motion pictures, and other once-new technologies continue to inform our contemporary thinking. [Brenton J. Malin (2014)] Benski and Fisher (2014) indicated in the introduction of their book 'Internet and Emotions' the Internet is a unique laboratory for the analysis of emotions for two main reasons: First, the Internet is a fertile ground for a huge diversity and amount of communication of all sorts and from a large and diverse group of people. Much of that communication is emotional, reflecting immediate feelings, sometimes as they occur – most use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter are now occurring on mobile devices. Second, these communication acts are all registered… When communication data become available, it is relatively easy to analyze since it is likely to be relatively complete and includes meta-data such as time and location, and at times other pieces of important demographic information about the authors of the data such as gender, education or online behaviour. [Benski and Fisher (2014)]

Emotions can be studied from neuro-biological and socio-cultural perspectives. Technology not only arouses emotions in users and serves as a channel for the expression of affection, but also influ- ences the way in which this affection is modulated, played out and displayed. [J Serrano-Puche (2015)] The adoption, pervasiveness and ubiquity of digital devices is not a mere quantitative issue, due to their 'wide distribution, customisation, and the possibility of permanent connection that they create, contribute to reconfigure various aspects of everyday life and of processes of contemporary subjectivation and socialisation' [Lasén 2014b: 7].

Emotions are important part of our lives. Although it is difficult to understand emotions in spite of the fact that we all experience an enormous variety of emotions in different situations. Our earliest emotional responses are basic and are triggered mostly by nonver- bal communication, such as mother's smile. As we become older, we become capable of complex rational thinking and we learn to handle complex emotions as well. Emotions always influence our decisions and behavior. Instinct is a mechanism that we use to determine the course of our actions in spite of our logic and ra-

tionale. Studies suggest that we can experience only four "basic" emotions: happiness, sadness, fear/surprise and anger/disgust and other emotions are combination various emotions. [Kontra agency (2017)] Like earlier, today also, we communicate to do flirt, gos- sip, coordinate, stay, harass, etc. as we used to do earlier also but with new mediated participants such as phones,

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computers, apps, smartphones etc. and in this reconfigured environment, diverse ways, different times, places, meanings and subjects emerge, in- volved in similar activities, relationships and interactions. New mediated practices resume past performances, speeches, values, interactions and situations. [Lasén 2014b: 7]

The digital domain has undoubtedly its own peculiarities, which come from its electronic nature, and that in turn affect the emotional dimension of the person. The traditional social life, which is slower and localised, coexists with the faster and uprooted digital social life. [J Serrano-Puche (2015)] The Internet allows researchers to investigate the huge amount of content readily available online. Sharing emotions is essential for creating and maintaining social ties, the status of social networks revolves around the emotions and feelings that users express about themselves, but at the same time find resonance among their circle of contacts. [J Serrano-Puche (2015)]

A research published in Science Direct.com by scientists has found that sixth-graders who went five days without even glancing at a smartphone, television or other digital screen did substantially better at reading human emotions than sixth-graders from the same school who continued to spend hours each day looking at their electronic devices. Many people are looking at the benefits of digital media in education, and not many are looking at the costs," said Patricia Greenfield, a distinguished professor of psy- chology in a prestigious College and senior author of the study. "Decreased sensitivity to emotional cues — losing the ability to understand the emotions of other people — is one of the costs. The displacement of in-person social interaction by screen interac- tion seems to be reducing social skills." [Stuart Wolpert (2014)]

You can't learn nonverbal emotional cues from a screen in the way you can learn it from face-to-face communication," said a senior researcher at a Children's Digital Media Center, Los Ange- les. If you're not practicing face-to-face communication, you may lose important social skills. She said the implications of the re- search are that people need more face-to-face interaction, and that even when people use digital media for social interaction, they're spending less time developing social skills and learning to read nonverbal cues. Social interaction is needed to develop skills in understanding the emotions of other people. Researcher said that emoticons are a poor substitute for face-to-face communication: "We are social creatures. We need device-free time." [Stuart Wolpert (2014)]

Patricia Greenfield, a distinguished professor of psychology has analyzed more than 50 studies on learning and technology and found that as technology is playing a bigger role in our lives, our skills in critical thinking and analysis have declined, while our visual skills have improved. Reading for pleasure, which has declined among young people in recent decades, enhances thinking and engages the imagination in a way that visual media such as video games and television do not. Regarding usage of new media for education; she feels that "no one medium is good for everything. If we want to develop a variety of skills, we need a balanced media diet. Each medium has costs and benefits in terms of what skills each develops." She suggests that schools should make more effort to test students using visual media, she said, by asking them to prepare PowerPoint presentations, for example.

2. Observations

The observation of the social media scenario around the author who himself is a social media user especially on Facebook, Whats app and Instagram platforms bring out the following discussions: -

Emotional intelligence plays a key role in communication. The capacity for understanding our own feelings and those of others, can help us respond to the behaviour, style of communication and actions of others. Positive emotions connect people and can bring change. It is important to bring a positive value to the audience and try to fulfill their intrinsic needs. Of course, there are some psychological tricks that can be used, such as 'playing with fear' or narrowing down the options and telling people what to do, but people like 'healthy emotions'. [Kontra agency (2017)]

A large-scale experiment done by communication researchers in 2014 has shown that emotional states can easily be transferred via emotional contagion over social networks. Since Facebook's (and other social sites') algorithm filters what people can see on their news feed, based on reception and preferences, the study has shown that social media activity is greatly influenced by the emo- tional quality and directions of the content the people are exposed to. In other words, people tend to produce less amounts of positive content when positive expressions are reduced and vice versa.

Facebook has publicly displayed just how important emotions are in February 2016 when a set of emotional responses were added to the well-known "thumbs up" response. This has enabled users to interact with the content more deeply, making them more likely to interact with the content as this gives them a variety of emotional responses.

All emotions are not equal, especially when it comes to social networks. A study shows how different emotions trigger different reactions from fans. The dominant emotion based on reactions per post is joy. 'Likes' are the expression of joyfulness. Posts that trigger 'fear' are shared most on social media. Posts that make the fans 'angry' get maximum comments. 'Sadness' is the least or last reaction in social media. Thus, joy and happiness create healthy long–lasting relation with relevant public. [Kontra agency (2017)]

Greenfield who has been using films in her classes since the 1970s If students spend more time with visual media and less time with print, and use evaluation methods that include visual media then they will give a better picture of what they actually know. ," said,. "By using more visual media, students will process information better," she said. "However, most visual media are real-time media that do not allow time for reflection, analysis or imagination — those do not get developed by real-time media such as television or video games. Technology is not a panacea in education, be- cause of the skills that are being lost. [Stuart Wolpret (2009)]

According to New Zealand based researcher Paul Kearney who measured multi-tasking and found that people who played a realistic video game before engaging in a military computer simulation showed a significant improvement in their ability to multi-task, compared with people in a control group who did not play the video game. In the simulation, the player operates a weapons con- sole, locates targets and reacts quickly to events. This is an indica- tion that involvement in digital interactive entertainment helps in developing stronger mental personality. [Stuart Wolpret (2009)] This is true for digital game players who play games like strategy games, puzzle games, role-play games etc. where game helps in learning some personality or cognitive skill which indirectly is like honing the emotional intelligence of the players.

3. Conclusion

All living beings are emotional and sensitive. Communication designer need to be considerate about this fact while designing communication strategies. Principles of human behavior, human psychology, visual communication, user-interface and design all are instrumental in making a good piece of communication for the users of electronic media. Every piece of communication (i.e. the content of any information such as a website, app, film, digital game etc.) hits the emotions of the users. If we want to communicate successfully, we must be conscious of human emotions and should design appropriately.

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