

The Role of Movies and Telephony in the History of Communication Media

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Abstract. Various types of new communication media have recently emerged such as e-mails, blogs, and social networks. We try to investigate this recent trend in communication in this paper based on the long history of human communications. Further, we want to elucidate that this trend could be interpreted as a shift from logical to emotional communications. We simultaneously want to clarify that this recent trend has its origins in the invention of movies and telephony in the late 19th century.

Keywords: Communications, media history, movies, telephony.

1 Introduction

New communication media as e-mails, blogs [1], and social networks [2] in the area of communications have recently emerged and have rapidly been changing the way we communicate. The influence of social networks such as Twitter [3] and Facebook [4] has especially been significant. The main characteristic of these new media is that people exchange short messages with other people in their small communities to inform others of their daily activities. Most of these messages do not contain any significant information but still work well to give people the feeling of “being connected.”

The emergence of digital games in the area of entertainment has similarly been changing the people’s behaviors. People used to enjoy entertainment before the era of digital games to forget the negative aspects of their daily toil and ease stress. However, people do not currently enjoy playing games for specific purposes but only for fun.

The basic trend behind these recent phenomena has been that our behaviors have been becoming increasingly more dependent on emotion rather than logic. Most of the messages exchanged through e-mails, Twitter, and Facebook have been short fragments of text and have mostly contained emotional and not logical information. Also, people enjoy playing games because these have a strong impact on the emotional aspect of their brains rather than the logical.

The question therefore is: “What has initiated such change?” In our long history of humanity, philosophers have been trying to define what the most specific human capability is and their conclusion has been that logical thinking and behavior represent the most specific human capability. This originated with the ancient Greek

philosopher Plato [7], who tried to classify the basic factors of human behaviors into *logos* and *pathos*. He also tried to place emphasis on *logos* declaring *pathos* to be something that was less intelligent in human beings.

We attempt to identify this recent trend in communications in this paper as well as in other areas of our everyday lives as a shift from logical to emotional thinking, or in other words, from *logos* to *pathos* based on our investigations into the long history of human communications.

2 The History of Communication Media

Let us look at the long history of human communications. It is obvious that one of the principal inventions in human history was the invention of written characters dated at around 4,000 B.C. Of course, we already had verbal languages before this invention. Nevertheless, people tended to convey emotional rather than logical information through their everyday use of language in the form of spoken messages. With the invention of written characters, they first had a way of expressing logical messages. However, it took a long time before they got to know the difference between logical and emotional messages. It could be said that Plato was the first to clearly identify the importance of people's logical way of thinking.

Nonetheless, it again required a long and gradual process before people actually learned how to express themselves logically. Only a few people such as philosophers, mathematicians, and physicists could express their thoughts/concepts logically. Most people still lived lives of emotion. But finally the invention of printing technology came by Gutenberg in 15th century. This invention made it easier for people to access printed documents and to understand logical messages and they thus began to think more logically. In this sense, the invention of printing technology is an extremely innovative invention in human history.

The invention of movies was achieved by the Lumiere brothers in the late 19th century and telephony was invented by Alexander Graham Bell during the same period. These two inventions are usually not as well recognized or evaluated in the history of communications and media compared with the invention of written characters and printing technologies. However, these two inventions were actually the next stage in tremendous innovations and comparable to the preceding discoveries. The main reason for this is that these media again initiated the trend in human behaviors back to being emotion dependent after the long years of a logic-dependent culture in the Western world.

The main characteristic in telephony is that people can exchange emotional verbal messages and bridge the gap of distance. Before telephony, text mail (snail mail) could mainly convey logical messages but made it difficult to convey emotional meanings. With the emergence of telephony, people could retain the feeling of being connected by engaging in verbal and emotional communications even though they were separated by distance. The influence this invention had was so forceful that it again drew people back from logical communications using printed text to the emotional communications that had existed in the era before Gutenberg.

The invention of movies had the same influence on people's behaviors. Again, people before the invention of movies received information mainly in the form of

written messages, which meant that they were used to receiving logical messages. However, the invention of movies changed the whole situation. The effect of images, especially moving images, were so strong that people were very easily exposed to the virtual world where people experienced the development of emotional storytelling.

It is very important to recognize the huge and significant influences created by these two new media that were invented in the late 19th century. As previously stated, the invention of printing technology initiated the shift from emotional to logical thinking. On the other hand, the invention of movies and telephony again initiated a reverse shift from logical to emotional thinking. Actually, the recent tendency of people's behavior toward emotional rather than logical behavior has been initiated by these two inventions. It is interesting and important to know that these inventions were achieved almost at the same time in the late 19th century. After that, the influence of these two new media gradually penetrated into our society.

3 Trend Behind New Communication Media

The era of networks arrived in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. In the late 20th century, e-mails appeared and blogs and social networks such as Twitter and Facebook have emerged in the early 21st century. It has become far easier for people separated by distance to exchange messages through these media. What is interesting here is that communications using these media are based on the exchange of text messages. As explained in Chapter 2, written messages basically convey logical messages. Despite this, it is noteworthy that the messages exchanged using these new media, especially in social networks, are usually very short, which makes it more difficult to convey logical meaning.

This fact was not very well recognized in the early days of e-mails. However, then text messaging with mobile phones became popular. As it is difficult to send long messages with mobile phones, people usually send short messages consisting of one or two sentences. The messages exchanged on mobile phones in such cases are not logical but emotional. This reminds us of short poems such as 'Haiku' or 'Waka' that are traditional forms of Japanese poetry.

It is interesting to point out the similarity in communications based on social networks to the communications done by exchanging Waka (short poems) almost a thousand years ago in Japan. It was customary at that time for nobles throughout Japan to communicate by exchanging Waka. It should be emphasized that although these Waka communications were done by exchanging written messages, the information exchanged in these communications was emotional.

What then is the effect of movies in our everyday lives? Movies represent one of the major sources of entertainment in people's everyday lives. It has become far easier to create fantastic scenes that were difficult to create in the early days of movies especially with the advance in computer-graphics technologies. Many scenes in recent movies tend to appeal directly to our emotions by only showing us dynamic images instead of including explanatory narrations and explanatory dialogues.

Another good example is games. People, especially youths, are eager to continuously play games. Most games are only for enjoyment. Actual humanoid characters can easily be generated due to the development of computer-graphics

technologies. Also, people can gain enjoyment from the development of interactive stories by controlling these realistic characters and interacting with other characters or monsters due to the development of interactive technologies. The brain functions that work when people are enjoying games are undeniably emotional.

The authors believe that the tendency of human behavior to shift from logical to emotional was initiated by the invention of movies and telephony. This gradually changed the basic way we think and behave. New communication media such as e-mails, blogs, social networks, and games have only accelerated this trend as have digital games.

4 Conclusion

The authors explained the phenomenon of the recent trend in communications focusing on such new media as e-mails, blogs, and social networks. The methodology we adopted was not only to observe the recent trend but also to try to learn about communications from our long history with it. What we found is that behind this recent tendency there is actually a more fundamental trend from logical to emotional thinking. We also found that this is a reverse movement to that people have tried to adopt during their long history from emotional to logical thinking, which was initiated by the invention of written characters, by great Western philosophers such as Plato and Descartes, and by the invention of printing technologies. We also indicated that this reverse trend was initiated by the invention of movies and telephony in the late 19th century. New technologies such as the Internet and computer graphics have only accelerated this trend.

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