

For citation:

El Yazidi, R. (2023), „The Digital Communication model: A New and the Last of Models? (Reflexion and proposition)”, *Media Dialogues / Medijski dijalozi*, Vol. 16, No. 1, pp. 39-49.

~~The Digital Communication model: A New and the Last of Models? (Reflexion and proposition)~~

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ARTICLE INFO	<i>Received: March 10, 2022 / Revised from: April 10, 2022 Accepted: May 10, 2022 / Available online: January 15, 2023</i>
DOI	10.14254/1800-7074/2022.16-1.3

ABSTRACT

This paper proposes a new communication model that is specifically designed for the digital age we live in. The proposed model takes into account the unique features of digital communication, including the use of social media and other online platforms, as well as the various ways in which we engage with others in this context. The model is based on a synthesis of existing theories and models of communication, as well as a critical analysis of the challenges and opportunities presented by the digital context. We argue that this new model can help individuals and organizations better understand and navigate the complexities of digital communication.

KEY WORDS: Digital Age, internet, digital communication, communication model, digital Model.

INTRODUCTION

As we continue to live in a digital age, communication has become an essential part of our everyday lives. With the rise of social media and other digital platforms, we are constantly communicating with others, sometimes without even realizing it. However, traditional communication models are no longer sufficient for this new context, and we need to develop new models that can help us navigate and understand the complexities of our digital communication.

Our attempt to propose a new model for communication in the digital age, aims mainly at a theoretical contribution to monitor, describe, understand, define, and interpret the communication phenomenon in the digital context we live in today, trying to understand the intellectual and ideological premises that stand behind the radical changes in the process of the action of communication and its elements, which we notice, especially at the level of the social contexts and distances of communication, the exchange of roles between the sender and the recipient/receiver, the disturbance of the temporal and spatial dimensions of the communicative process, the emergence of a comprehensive system of flows of personal information, the confusion of the message trajectory, the emergence of economic systems and business models whose main engine is personal information.

2. BACKGROUND: INTERNET 2.0: A CHANGE OF PARADIGM

If the development of media has already contributed, at a certain stage, to the development of communication models and the emergence of new elements and temporal and spatial dimensions of communication, such as continuous broadcasting on radio and television, and permanent access to world news. The Internet and social networking sites have also redrawn the boundaries of time and space in the process of communication, not only at the level of receiving, but also at the level of position,

broadcasting, and transmission. The user not only connects to the Internet from anywhere (office, home, public or private space) and at any time, and this is due to the abundance and diversity of information and communication networks that he chooses, but also transfers his intimate personal world to the digital space (through the medium of digital tools and personal websites). (Jouet, 2000) Thus, the digital today confirms the exhaustion and expiration of previous communication models as a prelude to redefining and rearranging social relations and imposing new parameters of time and space: Public and private/personal, as long as communication constitutes a continuous process and an indispensable social-psychological practice in all scenes of daily life, which has become digital to a large extent and varying degrees according to the nature of society, is it an industrial society from a technological point of view, or is it just a consumer of it?

So, the focus on the principle of interaction, whether with technical tools or with people, has been a major idea and a decisive factor in the radical change that the communication model has known in the digital age. This model, which is based in its essence on integrating the social, psychological, and cognitive needs of humans, appeared in the design of the structure of the Internet 2.0 and social networking sites, which led to its rapid spread and use by more than four billion people on the surface Earth. (Statista, 2023)

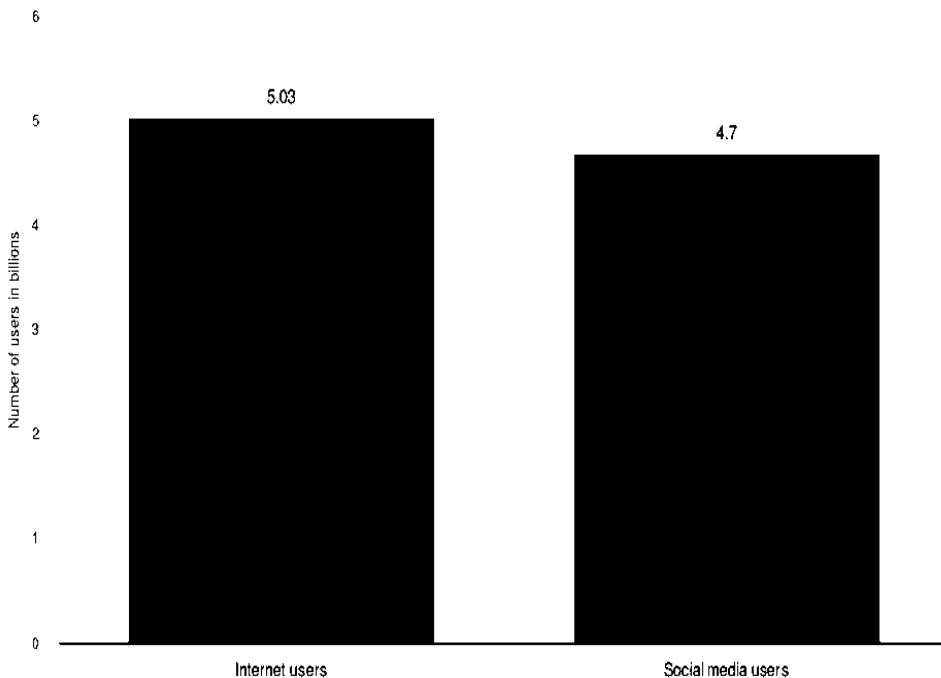


Figure 1. Number of internet and social media users worldwide as of January 2023.

The following is a table showing the most important differences between Internet 1.0 and Internet 2.0 as a starting point for proposing a communication model in the digital age:

Table 1, Comparison Between Technologies: From 1.0 to 2.0.

<i>Internet 1.0</i>	<i>Internet 2.0</i>
<i>Characteristics*</i>	
Document-centric	People-centric
Structured	Freedom
Taxonomy	Folksonomy
Folders	Tagging
Knowledge management	Knowledge sharing
Need to know	Need to share
One to many	Many to many
Centralized	Distributed
Rigid	Flexible

Source : Quoniam, & Lucien, 2009, p. 28.

3. DIGITAL COMMUNICATION MODEL (PROPOSITION)

Communication in the digital age has become a system of instantaneous network interaction, meaning that communication processes can be conducted at any time without specifying a time for that, regardless of the place in which the communicator is located, and it also gives the possibility of communication and interaction between the individual and himself, that is if the goal Of the communicative act is only an attempt to satisfy psychological needs such as self-affirmation, self-reflection, and highlighting its independent identity from the other, as we indicated earlier. And also between an individual and another, and between an individual and a group of individuals.

Thus, the place element in the communicative process is no longer the physical space that should be moved to according to the social context that requires it, and the personal social distances for communication have become largely unclear and overlapping with each other, and from it, it can be said that the power of the Internet and

* It should be noted in this context that between the years 1994 and 2004, there was no existence of both the terms internet (Web) 1.0 and Internet 2.0. Hence, only the issue of the Web was generally discussed, until the distinction between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 was announced for the first time in October 2004 at a conference organized by O'Reilly Media in an attempt to provide an inventory of the development that the Web has known since its inception. Dougherty and O'Reilly, who are considered professors of information technology, took advantage of the conference in order to make a comparison between the initial uses of the Web, that is what uses Web 1.0 permits and what Web 2.0 brought as new uses.

social networking sites as an interactive channel is evident in its diversity and inclusion of various elements of the communicative process and breaking the logic of previous models. It is a model in which the principle of relationalism flourishes and connections are formed par excellence, and in which temporal and spatial boundaries shrink.

The elements of the communication model in the digital age are as followed:

3.1 The sender

Constitutes the starting point of the communicative act, i.e. the center and core of the network, which automatically becomes a receiver/recipient for other senders who in turn form the center and core of their communication networks, meaning that roles are exchanged between the sender and the receiver automatically every moment a new message is transmitted.

3.2 The receiver/recipient

It constitutes the target of the communicative act, it is an element of the network, which becomes a sender as soon as it broadcasts any message in the network.

3.3 Channel of communication

The channel of communication has become a digital environment and space that takes the form of a relational network that can include thousands, millions, or billions of elements (individuals) and their constituent links in an endless process of growth, expansion, and divarication. It carries the characteristics of the Internet and social networking sites. It is also not accessed except by relying on modern communication tools/gadgets such as smartphones, computers, electronic tablets, and smart watches.

3.4 The message

The message in the form of digital communication takes all the methods and forms of expression that modern technologies allow for communication, including audio, written, visual, and even avatars: Pictures, written posts, comments, audio and video clips, icons, signs, and symbols. However, we note that there is confusion and overlapping in the paths and destinations of the message that were not the case in previous communication models. In other words, the messages that are broadcast on the network reach all its elements even if there is no special social context that frames the form and content of the message between the sender (center of the network) and the receiver/recipient targeted by the message (all elements of the network) which means depersonalizing the message. This is due to the overlapping contexts and per-

sonal distances of communication imposed by the structure and design of the Internet and social networking sites. To clarify this idea more, for example, a user on social networking sites publishes personal photos of a family occasion, in which he targets only part of the elements of the network, i.e. his relatives and close friends, and it also happens that the sender shares an article or scientific content related to his professional field, targeting his classmates or co-workers, and it happens that the user shares written proverbs, music, video clips, or satirical content, targeting only part of the network elements... But all these messages reach all network elements, that is, all network elements become within the same distance from the sender, the center of the network, regardless of the possibility of blocking content and assigning it to a specific recipient as a technical choice provided by social networking sites. This confusion, overlap, and disturbance in the paths of the message and its content is something, in our opinion, intended and deliberate by the designers of social networking sites. It has been integrated into the structure and design of the latter, to capture various social interactions with the same degree of spontaneity that we see in the physical/material world, and this makes the communicative process, with all its elements, transform into digital traces that can be classified later. Among the indicators that also show confusion and overlap in the paths of the message and its target is the amount of interactions and reactions (number of comments, number of likes, number of shares) that the sender gets in every message he broadcasts on the network. The confusion of the message is also directly related to both the elements of context and distance of communication, which we will discuss below.

3.5 Contexts and distances of communication and interaction

Among the characteristics of the communication model in the digital age is the overlapping of social contexts and distances, whether it is the satisfaction of psychological and social needs or the satisfaction of cognitive needs that take the form of communication, the search for information, self-expression, and recognition. To explain this idea more, we must go back to what was proposed by Edward T. Hall (1959, 1966), who has done extensive studies on forms of non-verbal communication, showing that four categories of personal space can be projected onto the digital world. At the level of physical reality/material world, Hall believes that the “intimacy” distance is about half a meter and includes only a very few social communication processes, and it is commonly used in most cases among individuals who are allowed to touch and get close to each other regularly, such as spouses, parents, and close family. As for the “personal” distance, which ranges between half a meter and one meter, it is the distance that separates us when we meet with friends and close acquaintances. A degree of intimate contact may/might be allowed in such meetings, but it is very limited. And there is the “social/formal” distance, which ranges from one to three meters, and represents the macroscopic physical area in which formal gatherings such as the workplace, interviews, and small seminars take place. The fourth category is the “public” distance that exceeds four meters and separates those

who perform an act or role in front of the audience (Giddens, 2006:5, PP 145-146). These four social distances vanish and wither as soon as one enters the digital space, where everyone becomes at the same distance from everyone, i.e. between the center of the network and its constituent elements, and the social contexts fade away, so that everything personal, intimate, or official, professional or public becomes available to everyone and is subject to probing, comment and criticism and interpretation by all elements of the network. Physical contact can be alternated by the available forms of digital interaction. You touch me digitally when you comment on my profile picture or like certain content by placing a heart, flower, or hug symbol. It should be noted in this context that major companies in the field of digital communication, such as Facebook, which changed its name to "Meta", are working on developing the digital space to become an integrated space, Metavers (movement, travel, contact, etc.) in which it is possible to conduct all kinds of communication and social interactions while trying to reach the same degree of feeling that we feel in real, physical life.

3.6 Temporal and spatial dimensions

We notice in the digital communication model that there is an unprecedented merging and overlapping of times and a reduction of places in the communication process. It is a process of neutralizing time to the point of canceling it, stripping communication of its physical spatial dimension, and presenting a symbolic alternative to it, to indicate only movement and transition from one place to another and from one subject to another in the form of recorded digital traces. Thus, there is a change in the time unit, as indicated by Pascal Robert, and this is due to the rapid, almost instantaneous, and uninterrupted flow of information, with the possibility of fixing technically the moment and place of broadcasting and receiving (2004, p 58). So this is what we call hyper-communicative and observable flow. Users of smartphones, computers, and smart watches connected to the Internet all the time have made digital and real life so closely linked that it is difficult to separate them. In this context, one can use McLuhan's saying, "The channel is the message," describing the increasing interdependence between different parts of the world as the "global village." This is an image that greatly expresses the digital society, where we can communicate with any connected person, and benefit through networks from services located anywhere on the planet. It is possible to be present in the workplace and talk at the same time with family members or friends. And to buy products from shops thousands of kilometers away from us, and visit institutions and monuments while we are in our places thanks to communication and chatting applications. Thus, the various social roles involved in all communication situations and contexts are activated simultaneously.

3.7 Archiving and preserving the communicative act over time in the form of digital traces

Among the characteristics of the communication model in the digital age is the saving of dates and archiving of the communicative process, keeping it in a globally shared digital memory, fixing it over time, and the possibility of referring to it at any time as digital traces produced through a digital medium. This feature, which was not present in previous models, stems from an economic and ideological vision aimed at profiting from communication processes, given that every communication passes through a digital medium, passes between one digital identity and another, and results in a huge number of digital traces, these traces reflect the true identity of each user, starting with the characteristics of the physical self and ending with the psychological and intellectual structure. With the ability to track and monitor all users. This communication forms the core of a business model in which the user becomes both the consumer and the product.

3.8 Response / responsiveness or reaction

We notice flexibility at the level of the response, which can be immediate and instantaneous, or be delayed according to the nature of the message and its importance to the receiver/recipient, in addition to the receiver's availability at the moment of the broadcast and his desire to respond or not.

The following is the communication model we propose:

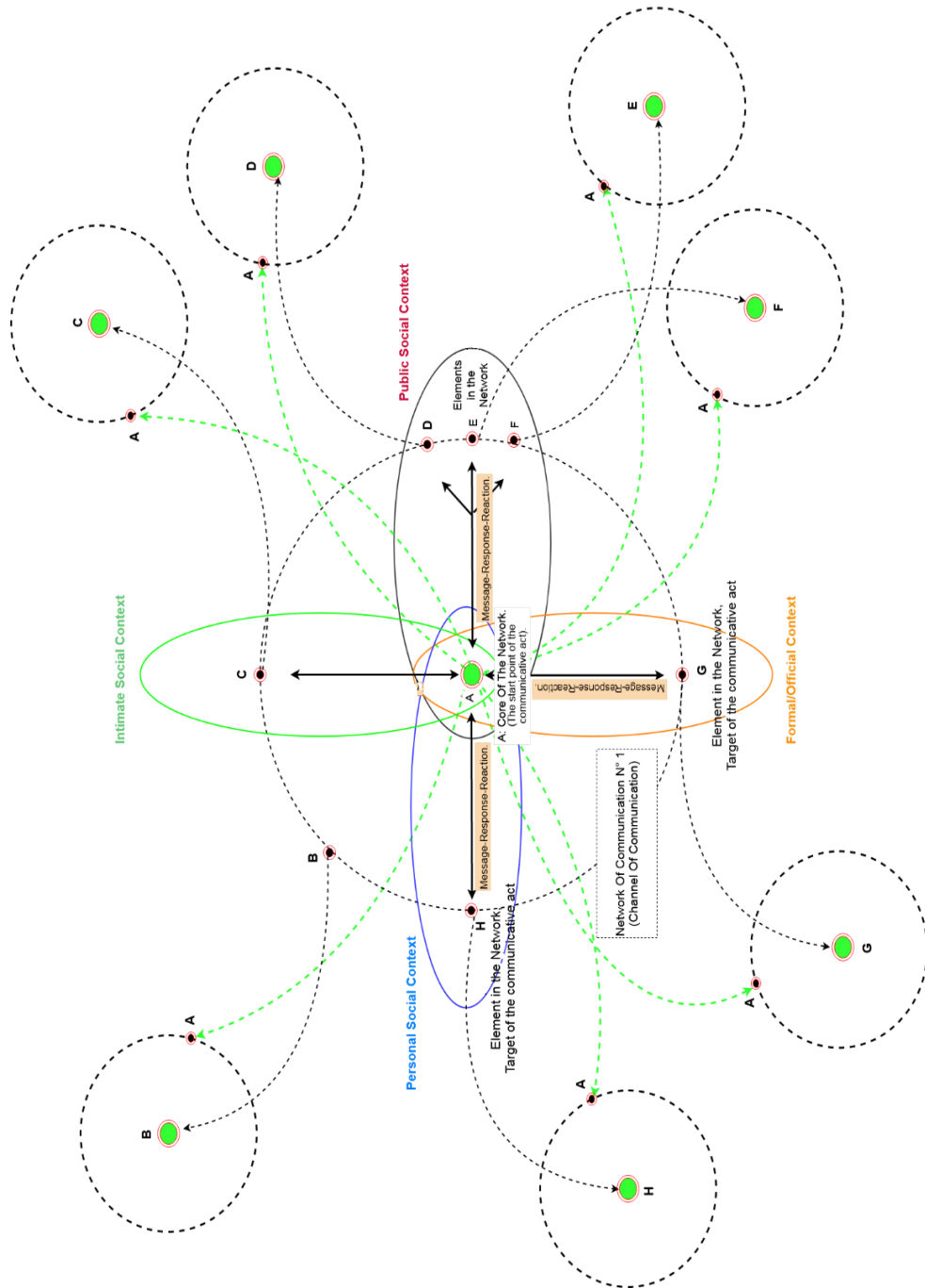


Figure 2. Digital Communication Model

Source: By Author

CONCLUSION

In summary, the explosion of the Internet, so to speak, and the widespread of social networking sites and personal digital platforms have disrupted the linear structure of communication from the sender to receiver, and abolished the vertical control, and the hierarchical structure of communication. Thus, this is what led to the fall of the hierarchical or linear mathematical model of communication and the emergence of a new logic in which the elements of communication exchange the roles of interaction, sending and receiving in a simultaneous, smooth, and easy manner. It is a model of multilateral and horizontal communication, in which power is transferred from the communicator to the technical digital space (the communication channel), and all forms and types of communication and the social contexts framing it are fused within a single model, this model is imposed by the structure of modern communication technology. It is a comprehensive system of multiple relationships, links, and expressive forms.

It is also noticeable that the Internet, social networking sites, and digital platforms of all kinds have contributed to the increase and expansion of the number of social relationships between individuals, regardless of their type and quality. Today, theoretically and technically, if we are more³ than seven billion people on the planet (Statista, 2023), this means that this same number can be multiplied many times in form of communication channels and relational networks centered on the self as the starting point of communicative action, in the sense that each person (individual) becomes a self-contained media institution, with its editorial line that reflects its identity with its various intellectual, doctrinal, psychological, social, political and cultural components.

At this particular point, we wonder if humanity is prepared -psychologically at the level of reception, intellectually at the level of analysis, and communicatively at the level of response - for the amount of information that is being produced at every moment and that is flowing uninterruptedly and without ethical institutional censorship of the content. Can we say that the digital age has brought us to the end of communication and its last model and at the same time to its death, where too much communication kills communication?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank Salwa Mousdil for her comments and corrections that have contributed to the evolution of this paper.

³ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/805044/total-population-worldwide/>

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