**Paulina Żmijowska**
**University of Ostrava, the Czech Republic**
e-mail: pzmijowska@gmail.com

# Playing with Information.
# Digital Society and Communication

ABSTRAKT

**Zabawa z informacją. Cyfrowe społeczeństwo komunikacyjne**

Zaprezentowany artykuł podejmuje próbę refleksji nad zagadnieniem przekazywania i odbierania informacji we współczesnym świecie. Jego nadrzędnym celem jest analiza miejsca, które zajmuje dziś odbiorca stanowiący zarówno główne źródło nadawania, jak i odbierania treści we współczesnym, cyfrowym społeczeństwie komunikacyjnym. W odniesieniu do teorii współczesnej konwergencji mediów, która powoduje integrację wielu narzędzi, procesów oraz form medialnych oraz dotyczy wszystkich jej uczestników, warto krytycznie zastanowić się nad pytaniem, jak wobec szumu informacyjnego i często sprzecznych komunikatów selekcjonować odpowiednie treści oraz czy jest to w ogóle możliwe?

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: komunikacja, informacja, cyfryzacja, społeczeństwo, transmedialność, odbiorca.

The main aim of the present contribution is not to deliver an exhaustive study on social communication, but to provide a comprehensive analysis concerning the role of old and contemporary methodologies of media experts and the processes of transmedia and media convergence in the modern world. The first part is aimed at presenting contemporary research concerning the investigated phenomena along with some cultural contexts. The subsequent section comprises an analysis of the nature of modern society, juxtaposed with an insight into the impact of the world of new media and technologies on it. The next part provides an analysis of the phenomenon of transmedia and the description of a contemporary recipient of information. The present contribution ends with some final remarks from the author that provide a final summary of the whole text.

## Cultural Contexts and Methodology

Although the everyday language of the recipients dealing with media and social communication is permeated with various definitions, suggestions and interpretations that govern their understanding, modern media researchers seem to refer to constructivism more and more often when dealing with the aforementioned issues. In relation to that, when analyzing the concept of messages, it is worth saying that they are structures based on schemes and system descriptions. At the discourse level, messages have a certain autonomy which consists of the possibility of constructing an infinite number of stories that the recipient reads with the help of these discursive rules. According to George Gerbner, a person or an institution may perceive, select and interpret events within a certain cultural context in order to disseminate them using available linguistic means with some underlying intentions that come in various forms. The recipient reads and interprets a text, thanks to his or her own skills, taking into account his or her own needs and expectations. What is more, the recipient benefits from his or her knowledge about the world, personal experience and information concerning facts provided by other sources. As a result of this process, the mind of the recipient creates a mental picture of the events described in the given text[1].

One of the greatest contemporary sociologists, A. Giddens, aptly notes that „we live in a world of transformations, affecting almost every aspect of what we do"[2] [author's own trans.]. For many years, a very dynamic process of the development of the so-called new media paradigm which does not have the limits of time, space, and language have been easily observable. Therefore, what can be stated is that the impact of technology on the social, economic and organizational dimension of communication among the participants is unprecedented. It is aptly summarized by Hopfinger who states that at the beginning of the 21st century, there are ways of communication that are appropriate to all stages of the communication infrastructure development. Such a development increases and differentiates the repertoire of characters, media, channels and transmissions. It seems that the range of social communication increases, while the share of indirect contacts declines spatial factors. It may be stated that social communication seems to be inevitable for contemporary societies. Moreover, as Hopfinger observes, communication may be treated as a form of specific interpretation of the society. It is the area where – with the whole range of views, positions, options -people communicate with themselves more or less effectively; they try to understand their location, their world and time, and problems – from

---

[1]  T. Piekot, *Dyskurs polskich wiadomości prasowych*, Kraków 2006, p. 108.
[2]  A. Giddens, *Socjologia,* Warszawa 2004, p. 474.

simple and banal to complicated and shocking – and find answers that are in between deep pessimism and euphoric hope[3].

The acceleration of the change concerning the communication stage – under the influence of new media – has transformed our perception of information. A participant of such communication is faced with new challenges, which can often be reduced to the ability to distinguish contemporary, hybrid media genres. The digitization of the modern world influences our way of acquiring knowledge and building the output of knowledge from many areas of life. These transformations are characterized, above all, by the cultural change which, according to Celiński, consists of a methodological change that introduces new methods, tools and ways of scientific work that allow for an effective use of the world of digital data, interfaces, software and visualization[4]. What can be, therefore, stated is that the world of new technologies is characterized by the increasing multithreaded and unclear communication noise. The ubiquitous saturation of goods and services along with a growing competitiveness among e.g., smaller entrepreneurs that we observe on the market hinder to attract and retain the attention of a recipient for a longer period of time. The development of the information society shows that the known ways of reaching the consumer have ceased to be useful. The current cultural trend of „PC" (post-era) shows that the excess of messages is currently the determinant of new information trends.

## The Society of Excess

Each of us is subjected to many transformations under the influence of cultural, social and biological factors. Contemporary information and consumerist society are characterised by ubiquitous redundancy in every sense of the word. Information transfer causes the recipient to have a difficulty in effective selection of the situation-relevant content and in evaluating the message he or she receives. Consumers' culture essentially conditions the production of an increasing number of products for the needs of individuals. Today, one can observe a significant transgression beyond the „production" scheme. In this context, it should be emphasized that the culture of excess, which has developed on the grounds of the culture of consumption, along with technological progress, is being replaced by it. They are both characterised by the *affluenza*

---

[3] M. Hopfinger, *Sztuka i komunikacja: sygnały zmian całej kultury*, [in:]: *Nowe media w komunikacji społecznej XX wieku. Antologia,* M. Hopfinger (ed.), Warszawa 2002, p. 457-458.

[4] P. Celiński, *Renesansowe korzenie cyfrowego zwrotu,* [in:] *Zwrot cyfrowy w humanistyce. Internet/Nowe media/Kultura 2.0*, A. Radomski, R. Bomba (eds.), Lublin, http://e-naukowiec.eu/zwrot-cyfrowy-w-humanistyce, (05.04.2018).

*phenomenon*[5], which is a civilisational disease – defined asa constant desire to increase the level and standard of living, and, at the same time, dissatisfaction with the existing conditions.

The excess and the associated culture[6] are also characterised by the saturation of the surrounding world with all kinds of stimulants. Understood in this way, the consumption does not concern (as in the case of consumption culture) only the accumulation of material objects, but also manifests itself in everyday activities, such as the lack of separation between work and personal life, which involves taking work home, glancing nervously at the phone screen or checking the stock exchange status. It is also worth noting that an individual who is shaped by the excess culture changes his or her social roles and multiplies his or her tasks.

One of the theories that the author of the present work often refers to concerns Gergen's concept of multiphrenia. Gergen's research focuses, among other things, on the phenomenon of multiphrenia, or a state related to the exodus. The aforementioned multiphrenia is a strong feeling of tension resulting from one's saturation in various kinds of stimuli[7]. The phenomenon primarily affects the conduct and operation of the information society, which views data as very important. Reality is a consequence of the changes taking place in the present and an awareness of being its recipients.

## Transmedia of Information Transfer

At this point, it is worth considering how the concept of „communication" should be understood in relation to the presented analysis. Etymologically, the word „communication" originates either from the Latin *communicate* – which means to be in a relationship, in relation to, participate or associate; or from another Latin word *communis* – which means common. T. Goban-Klas notes that, nowadays, almost every author of a more extensive dissertation devoted to communication considers it his or her duty to present his own understanding of the term. It is not strange that definitions of communication are large in number[8]. Another researcher, Roger Fidler, when describing the evolution of media communication, introduces the concept of *media-morphosis*, which denotes a gradual transformation of a given medium or group of media. According to him,

---

[5] K. M. Ekstrom, H. Brembeck, *Elusive Consumptin in retrospect. Report from the conference*, http://gupea.ub.gu.se/bitstream/2077/23184/1/gupea_2077_23184_1.pdf (05.04.2015).

[6] T. Szlendak, *Kultura nadmiaru w czasach niedomiaru*, [in:] „Kultura Współczesna. Teoria – Interpretacja – Praktyka", 2013, No. 1, p. 10.

[7] K. J. Gergen, *Nasycone Ja. Dylematy tożsamości w życiu współczesnym*, Warszawa 2009, p. 106-110. The author considers similar issues in work: *Komunikacja w dobie nowych technologii: społeczeństwo social media na wybranym przykładzie*, [in:] „Humanistyczny korpus" No. 17, Kiev 2018.

[8] T. Goban-Klas, *Media i komunikowanie masowe. Teorie i analizy prasy, radia, telewizji i Internetu*, Warszawa 2005, p. 42.

the transformation of means of communication (media) is caused by a complex impact of needs, competition, political and social pressures and technological innovations on the participants of the communication. *Media-morphosis* has proceeded gradually, by means of co-evolution, co-existence, convergence (overlapping and complementing media technologies and their social, cultural and economic implications), and the emergence of complex and consistent media systems. Fidler distinguishes three media domains:

- − the domain of communication (e.g., interpersonal communication, conversation),
- − the broadcasting domain (e.g., theatre, music, mass media: radio, film, television),
- − the documenting domain (e.g., writing, printing, literature, science)[9].

These domains are best understood in relation to the concept of a *media tree*. The metaphorical trunk of the tree refers to speech and language that were developed over 40,000 years ago and the aforementioned domains are referred to as the tree's branches. It is worth stating that the development of both was a rather simultaneous and interdependent process[10].

Permanent, known and widespread forms of information transmission are slowly becoming exhausted. Rational benefits resulting from the needs of clients, which the brands offer in the modern market, are often insufficient to achieve the assumed sales/relationship-building effects. The changing digital reality forces a quick replacement of the existing methods and ways of conducting activities by new solutions offering advanced communication strategies. It is not by accident that the phenomenon of transmedia has emerged. Transmedia, as Załuski puts it, is a phenomenon of culture, as well as one of the issues of contemporary aesthetics and artistic practice, in which the issue of creative openness is understood as the lack of boundaries to define what art is and what it is not[11]**.** Following this thought, it can be stated that every object can aspire to be a work of art. Thierry de Duve also elaborates on this matter. He writes that:

„we should never stop pondering or worrying about the fact that, today, in a completely legitimate way, everyone can be an artist, not being a painter, writer or musician"[12].

It should be noted, however, that, in this way de Duve refers to the fact that art, understood in the traditional sense of the word, is limited not only to the selected forms of expression but also to certain internal standards that have always defined and radically separated the areas of art such as sculpture, painting

---

[9] Presented on the basis of reading R. Fidler, *Mediamorphosis: Understanding New Media*, Pine Forge Press, 1997

[10] T. Goban-Klas, *Cywilizacja medialna*, Warszawa 2005, p. 29.

[11] T. Załuski, *Transmedialność?*, [in:] *Sztuki w przestrzeni trans medialnej*, T. Załuski (ed.), Łódź 2010, p. 9.

[12] T. de Duve, *Postduchampowski ład. Uwagi o kilku znaczeniach słowa «sztuka»*, trans. by K. Pijarski, „Obieg" 2008, No. 1-2, p. 50.

or architecture. Today, we note that media transcripts penetrate many forms of communication (not only art or artistic expression), creating the basic skeleton of the media culture. Form, which today is the dominant way of transmitting information message and advertising, responds primarily to the needs of the modern customer.

Transmedia is a form of infiltration of media messages. The beginnings of this phenomenon can be observed in various communications in traditional media (e.g., multiple advertising messages). However, technology has forced further changes in the transmission of information, which mainly consist of telling stories (the so-called narration of the message). It is a cognitive filter that allows the viewer to perceive information. The content conveyed by the broadcaster to the recipient in the transmedial message is, therefore, easier to learn, more enjoyable and stimulating.

## Man vs Information

David Bolter, the author of *Turing's Man*, emphasizes that computer technology can be called technology that defines our era, and modern man is simply a process reduced to a simple set of rules[13].

With reference to the above fragment, it should be said that currently there are two main elements that allow messages to attract specific recipients. These are primarily on structure of social connections (social chart) and the structure of the interests which are interested in (interest graph). Today, one question that requires elicitation is whether the willingness to obtain information depends on us, or on the type of medium used to transmit it. The information society is progressing and there is no doubt about it. One of the most famous media experts, Marshall McLuhan, in the work entitled *Mechanical Bride*, states that the overabundance of information has an impact not only on the emotional state of a single person but the society as a whole[14]. In his research, McLuhan comes to the conclusion that the form of the medium is more important than the entire content of the message. As recipients, we change into passive receivers who often process a specific media message without reflection. As he rightly notices, today, the medium of the message is simply a message shaping the behaviour of the modern recipient – the consumer of the information world.

---

[13] D. Bolter, *Turing's Man. Western culture at the computer age* , trans. T. Goban-Klas, Warszawa 1990.
[14] M. McLuhan, *Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man*, New York 1951, p.22. The author considers similar issues at work: *Komunikacja w dobie nowych…,* op. cit.

## Reflection

It seems that long-term communication in the virtual world impacts the way how reality is perceived. To be more precise, as a result of the impact of the virtual world on communication, reality ceases to be seen in a traditional way[15]. Although there are different schemes in the network than in everyday life processes and experiences, adaptation requires real experiences of the virtual world. Speaking of an artificial paradise, Welsch describes his world. As the author points out, if the network user identifies himself or herself too much with the virtual world, s/he alienates himself/herself from the real world. It is best summarized by Juszczyk, who claims that as a result of virtual overdependence, various people can lose the ability to communicate in social groups and in the families. They may also become devoid of the ability to empathize with the environment of the people they have contact with. What follows is that they become less sensitive and affectionate and their interest in learning decreases. They may experience difficulty concentrating on lessons, lose initiative, and their imagination and aesthetic behaviour may be dulled[16].

The contemporary excess of information in the digital world, which uses a variety of techniques and forms of communication, is a answer to the violent behaviour of the recipient, whose attention can be won only with a wide range of means of communication. Media, such as the press, television and the Internet, penetrate various to ols of accessing information in order to create appropriate forms of communication. All this requires the use of very complex and coherent processes of transmitting information in which the aforementioned tools are not only responsible for transmitting information but sometimes become pieces of information themselves. The last question that needs asking is: are we the participants of the „media performance” in which fast and short play with information continues or are we playing with the information ourselves?

## *Bibliography*

Bolter D., *Turing's Man. Western culture at the computer age*, trans. T. Goban-Klas, Warszawa 1990.
De Duve T., *Postduchampowski ład. Uwagi o kilkuznaczeniach słowa „sztuka"*, trans. K. Pijarski, „Obieg" 2008, No. 1-2.
Gergen K. J., *Nasycone Ja. Dylematy tożsamości w życiu współczesnym*, Warszawa 2009.
Giddens A., *Socjologia*, Wydawnictwo PWN, Warszawa 2004.

---

[15] W. Welsch, *Sztuczne raje? Rozważania o świecie mediów elektronicznych i innych światach*, trans. J. Gilewicz, [in:] M. Hopfinger (ed.), *Nowe media w komunikacji społecznej w XX wieku Antologia*, Oficyna naukowa, Warszawa 2002, p. 470.
[16] S. Juszczyk, *Człowiek w świecie elektronicznych mediów…* ,op. cit., p. 147.

Goban-Klas T., *Media i komunikowanie masowe. Teorie i analizy prasy, radia, telewizji i Internetu*, Warszawa 2005.

Hopfinger M., *Sztuka i komunikacja: sygnały zmian całej kultury,* [in]: *Nowe media w komunikacji społecznej XX wieku. Antologia*, M. Hopfinger (ed), Warszawa 2002.

Juszczyk S., *Człowiek w świecie elektronicznych mediów – szanse i zagrożenia,* Katowice 2000.

McLuhan M., *Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man*, New York 1951.

McQuail D., *Mass Communication Theory,* trans. M. Bucholc, Warszawa 1997.

Piekot T., *Discourse of Polish press releases*, Kraków 2006.

Szlendak T., *Kultura nadmiaru w czasach niedomiaru,* [in:] „Kultura Współczesna. Teoria – Interpretacja – Praktyka", 2013, No. 1, p. 7-26.

Welsch W., *Sztuczne raje? Rozważania o świecie mediów elektronicznych i innych światach*, tłum. J. Gilewicz, [in:] M. Hopfinger (ed), Nowe media w komunikacji społecznej w XX wieku Antologia, Oficyna naukowa, Warszawa, 2002.

Załuski T., *Transmedialność?*, [in:] *Sztuki w przestrzeni transmedialnej*, T. Załuski (eds.), Łódź 2010.

### Online references

Celiński P., *Renesansowe korzenie cyfrowego zwrotu*, in: Radomski A., Bomba R., (eds) Zwrot cyfrowy w humanistyce. Internet/Nowe media/Kultura 2.0*,* Lublin, http://e-naukowiec.eu/zwrot-cyfrowy-w-humanistyce, (05.04.2018).

Ekstrom K. M., H. Brembeck, Elusive *Consumption in retrospect. Report from the conference*, http://gupea.ub.gu.se/bitstream/2077/23184/1/gupea_2077_23184_1.pdf, (05.04.2015).

**Playing with Information. Digital Society and Communication**

Summary

The present article attempts to reflect on the issues of transmitting and receiving information in the modern world. Its main aim is to analyze the position of the recipient who not only receives but also transmits the content in the contemporary digital communication society. In the context of contemporary media convergence theory, which involves the integration of many tools, processes and media forms and concerns all its participants, it is worth analyzing whether it is possible to select relevant content in the face of the information noise and constant occurrence of conflicting messages.

Keywords: communication, information, digital, society, transmedia, recipient.