

Old Media vs. New Media: Staying in Touch with Family Members who Live  
Nearby and Far Away

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The term old and new media differs for some people. There are people who see them as two different things. Old media has been known among some people as just an archaic media that is no longer used. In contrast, new media is defined by many people as the modern media that uses the Internet and advanced technologies. Some people say that there is no difference between them. As John Peters (2008) says, “New media do not replace old media; they rearrange older function and sometimes provide them with even more powerful platforms.” This paper will be based on the common definitions that have been mentioned above.

Both the old and new media were used at different times and by different generations. In the past, old media was used to communicate, broadcast, and do many other things. On the contrary, new media is what is commonly used nowadays. The usage of new media does not diminish old media; some people still use old media nowadays. Faxing, printing, listening to the radio, watching TV were all started by old media and still are in use today.

Which one is better, old or new media? This question has been asked by a lot of people and has been a controversial topic for a long time. People supporting either side have their own points that support their ideas. That is also why; some old media is still used in many places. Besides, both media have benefitted their generation in some way, and it is hard to say which one is better because of the time they aroused.

The main point of this paper is comparing old and new media in terms of staying in touch with family members and friends who live nearby and far away. The paper does

not to say or choose which one is better; it shows how both of them work. Media has played a big role in the past and present whether it was old or new. They both enable families and friends who live far away from each other to stay in touch in some way. Without old and new media, communicating and staying in touch with close people and loved ones would not be possible. It would make it harder for people to leave their loved ones even if there was an emergency or anything else because of lack of communication.

The main theme of the paper is the pros and cons of old and new media when it comes to communicating with family members and friends who live nearby and far away. The paper is going to revolve around how they work, who owns them and who uses them, their quality, trustworthiness, and social impact on both media.

Both old and new media have their own ways of working and processing information. It mostly depends on the time they developed and technology they used. In the era of the old media, people did not know much about technology. Thus, when old media came out, it was a phenomenon. It made it possible for things that seemed impossible to happen. For example, people would not have thought that communication across continents was possible. Such form of communication became possible because of invention of media.

There are many differences between old and new media focusing on their functionality. When old media started it was not easy to use. People who wanted to make calls had to go through a long process before doing it. Telephones were located in specific places. People had to go to these physical locations in order to make the calls. In the past, transportation was a challenging issue making it impossible for people to make telephone calls. Not only did people have to travel long distances to access telephones,

but also telephones were in cabins and people had to wait queues. Secondly, the process of calling took a long time and in some countries, it would not work sometimes. For example, in the Middle East, my grandparents used to give the number they wanted to call to someone who worked for the place or company that owned the phone to dial for them and connect them. This process was lengthy. Thirdly, phone calls used to cost a lot, especially international calls. In the Middle East, it was seven dollars a minute and maybe twice the amount for international calls. People who had family members who lived far away did not communicate with them a lot. Moreover, there is a time difference between countries that are far away from each other. Besides, telephones were not always available, so people had to find the right time to call their loved ones located far away before the phone cabin closed. Besides, they were all heavy and expensive, and if one of these devices broke, it cost a lot to repair it.

Another media source that old media used was the telegraph. According to John Peters (2008), “Telegraph means distance-writing and all writing, in a way, is distance-writing.” Thus, the telegraph is a way of communicating using texting. The same thing that applied to telephones applied to telegraphs: they both were not always available and were not located everywhere. A good thing about the telegraph in the past was that a message could be left for the other person to read anytime even if there was a time difference for those who lived far away.

In class, we learnt about the digital divide and how it controlled and still controls some of our media today. Although time has changed, digital divide still finds its way to get control on the media. When media first aroused, it was not available for everyone, it was more like a private technology. Many businessmen and companies used it as a tool of

trade or a source for getting money. As I mentioned before, calls were expensive, which obviously benefited the rich.

Making a phone call in the past was considered impossible considering the budget for middle class and poor people. The reason for this is related to the owners of the media. Rich people and companies who owned the media had opened many branches in many cities, but there were no many branches in poor neighborhoods, which made it difficult for poor people to make phone calls. Since few companies owned media creating a monopoly, limited phone calls were available to the poor people in the society. It was hard calling relatives and friends nearby and far away.

New media is now considered the best way to stay in touch with family members and friends. Because of the greatness of new media, companies' still owns it in some way. It is not private like old media, but still because of its profits, companies' would not want to make it for free, so they started buying these types of technology to benefit from them. To get a phone and make a phone call is easy. It is simply just buying a phone and a line from the company that owns it and using it anytime. For many people, it does not matter who owns the media today as long as it is cheap and available. Digital divide is still around; an example is hardship poor people overcome to get access to the Internet whether they want to chat with someone or do some work. They have to pay for the time they spend on a computer. For poor people, communicating with family members and friends who live far away from them is a hard process, and they need to save money for it.

A big difference that people always notice between old and new media is the quality. Many people say that new media delivers better quality than old media because

of its technology that grows every day. Others say that old media is good, but it just needs a little quality to be added to it to make it convenient for people who like using it. Some people do not see it necessary to retain old media and add quality to it when cheaper new media is available with better quality. Besides, putting quality in old media makes it new media; at least that is how some people see it. However, each period of time has a certain quality of its technology.

Considering old media, the speed of making a phone call even to people who were nearby took three to five minutes to get connected. If it was a telephone cabin or a company that owned the telephone, an operator had to connect or receive a signal to connect the call. Secondly, when telephones first started to be used in houses, they were attached to a wire and not wireless. People had to keep standing or staying near the telephone when making a call. In addition, houses could not make an international or call a faraway place, so families could not make a call to any family members and friends who lived far away. Thirdly, telephones in the past had a limit for their usage because of the telephone bill that not many people could afford at that time. Fourthly, the sound quality and clearance problems were very common in old telephones, especially when calling another country. For example, I had an uncle who lived in Oman in the 1960s, and my grandparents had a hard time calling him. They kept dialing over and over because of the sound quality that was not clear.

New media, as many people see it, is the superior media right now. Its quality amazes people, and it keeps growing every day. New media has many qualities that were not available in the old media. First, making a call with a cell phone today is very clear even if the call is to another country. Also, it only takes seconds to connect a call, which

is of course fast because of network development. Secondly, a cell phone usage is unlimited now. People can talk and text as long as they want without worrying about a huge bill at the end of the month. Each phone company now provides an unlimited usage plan that does not cost much. Thirdly, video calls have made phone calls more entertaining for many people. People did not think that it could happen one day. For example, because technology aroused late in the Middle East, people were amazed by it and could not believe what they were seeing. People had the chance to see any family member or a friend that lived in any part of the world and chat with him. Personally, every week my family in Kuwait gets together and calls me via Skype, so it is like we are all sitting together. Old people in the Middle East that did not used technology much were kind of shocked when they saw a video call or a message. Lastly, modern media is able to connect more than one person on the line when making a call. People now could connect as many family members and friends on the same line instead of calling them one at a time.

Sticking with staying in touch with family members who live nearby and far away, but this time is by TV and journalism. Are TV and journalism a trustworthy source when it comes to news? Are they the best sources to keep family aware about what is going on in a faraway place that a loved one lives in? Both media has some people's comments on them and whether they were trustworthy or not.

Old media has been known before as a very trust worthy media because it only came from one source whether it was TV, radio or newspaper. People in the past did not have many other sources that made them become confused about which news was true and which was false. In addition, if people had a family member who lived in another

country, they would believe any news involving the other country. The reason may be because they could not contact the other member at anytime and the news at that time came only once or twice a day, which made it trustworthy because there was no other news that said something different. At that time, political problems were not as many as they are today so reporting a lot of information was not necessary.

With all the technology that is around today, it did not make new media 100% trustworthy. Many people have family members and friends who live in another city or country, but they are not sure what is going around in the place that they are in. A problem that I personally face a lot is when something bad such as an earthquake or a tornado happens in the city that I am in or even a city that is not near me, my parents keep calling me all the time to make sure everything is fine. The reason why this happens is because now everybody writes and rephrases the news in their own words that could be a little bit different, which leads to decreasing the trust in people about new media. New media maybe available everywhere and they give news every minute, but still for some people, it has not become their best choice for news.

The last comparison is on social media, how it is effective media, and how it eased people's lives. Social media now is all what we use and depend on. We cannot be certain about anything we hear without confirming from social media. Today, many people rely on social media for many different things. Social media is considered as a new media, and it has played a very effective role in arousing the name of new media. Old media did not have something called social media. However, we all agree that social media is a very important part of our lives today, and without it, many things would not be as they are today.



Old media did not have all the great benefits of social media that new media has right now. Therefore, the generation that old media was born in suffered many things. A society that had old media lacked the information about other societies. People in the past did not get to know what was happening around the world at the same time it happened. Same thing applies to people who have family members and friends far away. They could not know much about them because they did not have social media. Besides, they did not have news or events constantly. News was broadcasted on TV or radio once in a while, and people had to have the TV or radio on to get it. Another thing that old media lacked was sharing news between different people. Without social media, people had to wait until they got together to share their news and talk about what happened with them. Not to forget that the difficulty of transportation did not make people get together a lot, which leads to having to wait a long time to meet and talk. Also, when an emergency occurred or any happy or sad event happened, it took a long time for the news to be delivered. Another example on the Middle East is that if there was an urgent occurrence such as a woman giving birth, the family had to send one of their children to get in touch with someone to look for a midwife. It would have been much easier if there was social media.

Social media has had some impacts on new media. Social media is the greatest thing that happened to the new media. It made new media the most used technology today. Social media brought many significant changes in the new media such as families and friends get to know about each other anytime they want, they know what is going on around if they are far away. For example, a family could know about their son that lives in another country just by checking one of his social media accounts. Today, many people post almost every occurrence in their lives on social media as it happens

immediately on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram. It is helpful for older people who do not know much about technology to have some of their relatives showing them recent pictures of whom they want to see; and they could do that by Instagram or checking their Facebook and Twitter accounts. Another thing that social media does is that if there is an important event or urgent news, it posts these news for people to see.

All the comparisons mentioned above showed how both old and new media have benefited their generations. It could be argued that the new media has more advantages but still, old media helped people in the past a lot to stay in touch with all their family members and friends. Staying in touch with loved ones is no longer hard because of new media. People could know everything about anyone at any time. It is clear that old and new media have both positives and negatives. Also, the way they work, who owns them and who uses them, their quality, and trustworthiness prove that each media has been very effective in its time.

In conclusion, there is no simple answer for the questions that I mentioned in the introduction, which is which one is better, old or new media? This topic will remain controversial for a long time, even if one side has more supporters than the other. A thing that people can all agree on is that without these two kinds of media, our lives would not be as they are today; many things will be different and not as good as they are now.

Reference

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