
NEW FACETS OF CULTURE AND THE ARTS WITHIN THE NOWADAYS WORLD OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND NEW TECHNOLOGY

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Abstract. The evolution of new technologies, sophisticated information systems and a constant seek for innovation have been significantly transforming most of the areas of human activities, including the field of culture and the arts. In particular, two areas have to be highlighted: the way how the arts are created and the way how the arts are delivered to their audiences. In the first case the new technologies have enabled the creation of the completely new forms of arts especially with the use of digital technologies, so called digital arts. In the second case the wide spread of internet, evolution of new personal devices (smart phones, tablets, e-book readers etc.) and social media emergence caused radical changes in distributions channels of cultural products based on their digitalization and dematerialization. The aim of this paper is to analyze revolutionary changes in the field of culture and the arts enabled by the global implementation of new information and communication technologies within our everyday lives. These changes indicate a transformation of traditional production and distribution formats within the arts and cultural industries towards dematerialized cultural contents in the digital age.

Key words: culture and the arts, ICT, digitalization, dematerialization, knowledge society

1 INTRODUCTION

The thematic orientation of the Fifth AASRC 2013 International Conference encompasses areas of the information systems, technology and innovation. These three phenomena are fundamental attributes of a knowledge economy – the socio-economic paradigm of a nowadays world. In its essence, the knowledge society is framed by information and communication technologies (ICT) and people able to use these technologies. Besley (2010) claims that knowledge is now the dominant feature of the social transformations associated with globalization as the world-wide integration of economic activity. According to Andersson et al. (2010) the flow of knowledge is the hallmark of technology transfer and the primary factor determining the standard of living. However, the authors claim that the knowledge revolution has contributed to the rise of economy which has proven to be unsustainable. They see the greatest challenge in connecting meaningfully with knowledge innovation agents to enhance their capacity to handle innovation as the process of putting knowledge into action (Andersson et al., 2010).

Since there is a strong primary focus on technologies within the knowledge society we may question the role of humanities in general, and the role of culture and the arts in particular, in the knowledge era. On one hand, there is a criticism of the techno-economic orientation of current knowledge economy (Bullen et al., 2004, p. 4). The authors argue that since the formation of knowledge economy policy has been informed by the knowledge economy paradigm it works to preclude many humanities and creative art disciplines (Bullen et al., 2004). On the other hand, Kelemen et al. (2007) point out the unprecedented intersections between culture & the arts, the science & research and information technologies in the knowledge economy resulting into a new space – so called cyberculture, which is being created and disseminated within the cyberworld. The purpose of this paper is to discuss new

facets of culture and the arts within a nowadays world of information systems and new technology.

2 ARTS IN THE WORLD OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND NEW TECHNOLOGY

If we want to speak about artistic creation in the world of information systems and new technology we have to speak – first of all – about digital arts. Digital art is a general term for a range of artistic works and practices that use digital technology as an essential part of the creative and/or presentation process. Since the 1970s, various names have been used to describe the process including computer art and multimedia art, and digital art is itself placed under the larger umbrella term new media art (Paul, 2006; Wolf, 2009). Though digital media date back to the 1940s and digital arts to the 1950s, it is only since the mass marketing of personal digital technology in the mid-1980s and the arrival of the world wide web in the early 1990s that social science researchers have begun to ask themselves what is the relation between new media and development, and particularly how relations between the First and the Third World become restructured (Escobar, 2000; Castells, 2000)

The technology of digitalization enabled dematerialization of a lot of originally tangible cultural products (CD, DVD, printed books, etc.). The consequent evolution of sophisticated personal devices like (smart phones, tablets, e-book readers, etc.) made it possible to transfer these digital cultural contents from their producers directly towards their consumers in a dematerialized form. These technological advances caused a real revolution on cultural markets enabling a democratization of cultural production. Poole (2011, p. 5) argues that to date, new digital technologies have had their deepest impact on production and dissemination practices in disciplines and practices outside the performing arts. Writing and publishing, music, media arts (film and video and new media) and visual arts all have practices involving the production of physical objects which are distributed to the public (books, recordings, films, tapes, photographs, etc.) The digital transition allows artists and companies to replace physical objects with electronic files and to displace distribution over time and between places with instantaneous distribution over networks.

In this place especially two companies have to be mentioned: Apple which opened iTunes store in 2003 and Amazon launching an e-book reader Kindle a few years later. These two companies – clear market leaders in online music sector (Apple) and e-books sector (Amazon) – marked a new path in cultural products delivery. The clues to success among consumers were in both cases the simplicity of use and the price of the product. The iTunes lowered and unified the price of music so any song independently of its author or interpreter costs 99 cents. By offering such a low price it became more comfortable for consumers to buy the music instead of pirating it. Similarly, Amazon offers an e-book several times cheaper than the printed one. The Kindle is easy to use and the e-book is purchased, paid and delivered within a few seconds. From marketing point of view, both of these systems are built on two consumer advantages constituting modern variable of 4C marketing mix – Convenience to buy (originally Place/Distribution) and Cost to satisfy consumers wants and needs (originally Price).

3 ARTS IN THE WORLD OF NEW INTERACTIVE MEDIA

Another revolution in the nowadays world of information systems was caused by the emergence of Web 2.0 technology in the late 90s of the 20th Century (Di Nucci, 1999), and social media in the mid 2000s. Web 2.0 characterizes a set of web technologies, often abbreviated as AJAX for ‘asynchronous Java and XML’, that facilitate publishing and content sharing, as well as the establishment of social networks (Schäfer, 2011). Scott (2010) defines social media as an on-line space where people can share ideas, content, thoughts and

relationships. He points out that social media differ from so-called “mainstream media” in a way that anyone can create, comment and add to social media. Social media can take the form of text (blogs and wikis), audio (podcasts), video (YouTube), images (Flickr), and communities (Twitter, Facebook and more). Maurya (2011) advocates the term “consumer generated media”. He describes it as a result of the transformation of technology and media, which gives users a personalized and efficient presentation of opinion over these platforms. Consumer Generated Media became popular for many different reasons. They are limitless (online space has no geographic, age-related or socioeconomic barriers or borders), quick, anonymous, expressive and powerful, effective, targeted, inclusive and trusted.

In view of the dissemination of cultural products, in particular, two types of consumer generated media should be highlighted: Facebook and YouTube. *Facebook* was established as a Harvard-only social networking site in early 2004. By September 2006, the network was extended beyond educational institutions to anyone with a registered e-mail address. The site remains free to join, and makes a profit through advertising revenue (Phillips, 2007). A typical *Facebook* profile consists of a number of different sections, including Information, Status, Friends on Facebook, Friends in Other Networks, Photos, Notes, Groups, and The Wall. Nowadays, *Facebook* achieved more than 916 million active users worldwide (CheckFacebook.com, 2012). The system enables to spread various types of audio-visual contents (music, videos, pictures etc.) to other user through the network. This so called “word-of-mouth” may have an important impact on the consumption of cultural products within a selected group of consumers. Another Facebook feature “like” plays a role of a personal recommendation of a product or event and influence the consumer behavior.

YouTube created in 2005 represents an audio-visual kind of social media. Nowadays, *YouTube* is the world's market leader for online video. It allows users to upload and share videos and other consumer generated content through Internet, via websites, mobile devices, blogs or e-mails. Anyone with Internet access is able to store and view videos on *YouTube* free of charge. *YouTube* has reached several agreements on content with communication companies such as CBS, BBC and the music divisions of Universal, Sony and Warner (Artero, 2010). The consumer preferences and opinions can be expressed by rating the videos and by adding written comments to videos visible to the whole community.

4 CONCLUSION

We live in the era of knowledge society which is based on the implementation of knowledge for further development. However, the current state of knowledge economy – based primarily on the extensive implementation of information and communication technologies enabling the effective use, storage and dissemination of knowledge – is criticized as “an impediment for the humanities and creative arts” (Bullen et al., 2004). The authors claim that by adopting a techno-economic paradigm and by positioning technology as the catalyst of revolutionary change, the drivers of the knowledge economy are located outside of society and culture (Bullen et al., 2004).

However, based on the analysis presented in our paper we cannot agree with this postulate. Accordingly, Powell and Snellman (2004) point out the recognition of the importance of knowledge and intangible capital in fostering economic growth and social change. Yet, the knowledge era brought significant changes into the world of the arts and culture. First, the new technologies inspired the creation of new forms of art, especially within the digital cultural. Further, the evolving digitalization enabled the dematerialization of tangible cultural production and facilitated their accessibility to broader publics. As a result, the cultural products which were previously placed on the market in tangible forms (CD, DVD, books) have been increasingly replaced by their dematerialized versions via internet for more accessible prices.

Moreover, the development of new communication technologies, in particular the sophisticated personal devices (smartphones, tablets, e-books readers, etc.) and the emergence of consumer generated media (YouTube, Facebook, etc.) revolutionized the way how the arts and culture are delivered to their audiences. In view of the above mentioned facts there is no doubt that the information systems and new technologies have been changing the face of the arts and culture in the nowadays world. Despite certain constraints connected with a natural reluctance towards changes in usual economic, market and social models we cannot really say whether these changes will be positive or negative in a long run. However, the progress cannot be avoided. So, we should rather see the technological revolution of knowledge economy paradigm as a challenge and an opportunity to explore new ways and forms of artistic expressions and their dissemination towards broader audiences.

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