

Chapter 18

Media Literacy, Co-Innovation, and Productivity: Examples from European Countries

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ABSTRACT

This research analyzes the connections between media literacy and context of the knowledge economy, establishing a relationship between so-called co-innovative sources (ICT, organizational innovation and qualifications of employees) of the business environment and media literacy. It seeks to verify the behavior of media literacy as a co-innovative source, as fundamental as the three other ones to the viability and sustainability of companies. Authors start from a literature review related to media literacy and knowledge-based economy and then raise their own model that integrates the co-innovative sources and media literacy (the ‘Tetrahedron of Co-Innovative Sources’) with which analyze media literacy in the business context. To verify the proposed relations, the research uses the Celot and Pérez Tornero’s (2009) framework (proposed in the “Study on Assessment Criteria for Media Literacy Levels” delivered to the European Commission) with official statistical sources in Europe, returning results with which to test the hypothesis that a higher level of media literacy of citizens of a country has a positive influence on its companies and businesses.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-9667-9.ch018

INTRODUCTION

Thanks to the expansion of various Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in recent decades, the capitalist economy is expanding its reach and incorporating information and knowledge as a commercial commodity. This fact, together with other international changes -free movement of goods and capital, the greater importance of multinational companies, etc.- has been carried out under the so-called globalization. This economy, among other models developed by the network company (Castells, 1996), contributed to the consolidation of the Information Society across the globe, and in different areas of life.

In this scenario, the so-called media literacy is becoming a key aspect for the survival and success of people and organizations in the 21st century. According to Celot and Pérez Tornero's (2009) report, which was delivered to the European Commission and will be used as a framework reference in this research, media literacy has to do with the "capacity of individuals to interpret, analyse, process and contextualise media messages in general" (p. 22). Thus, it comprises the skills and abilities of individuals to know how to search, select, access, evaluate, use, create, and disseminate media content. Today, all companies -media or not- and individuals, citizens and public administrations have to know how to manage the contents that are available daily through various media.

Therefore, the importance of media literacy is such that, specifically, its promotion and evolution have been piloted by different social and political actors and studied and investigated both from the international perspective (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 1982) and European (Pérez Tornero, Celot, & Varis, 2007). It can be said that from the Grünwald Declaration (UNESCO, 1982), when a group of experts from 19 nations met under the auspices of the UNESCO, media literacy has been

a steady and periodic concern of international organizations related to education, media, and global development policies.

In addition, with the increase in digital technologies since the early nineties, media literacy, which initially covered only the skills for the knowledge and understanding of the media, acquires another key element: the capacity for active participation in production communicative messages. The development of the Internet and the emergence of other technological innovations, such as digital recording, small video cameras, mobile devices and platforms for cloud computing, has generated "an explosion of creative activity" (Bowman & Willis, 2011, p. 18). And so we can say, now more than ever, it is necessary for citizens to be media literate, because not just talking about access and use of digital tools but also skills for the digital society citizens can exercise their new role as a producers of content and messages in all types of media, both personal and organizational.

Besides, and according to Jenkins, Purushotma, Weigel, Clinton and Robison (2009), we list at least three other keys to the defense of the need to acquire good levels of media education in the public and society as a whole reasons: i) the existence of digital divides and therefore different levels of civic participation of people from different socio-cultural realities; ii) the difficulty of exercising a critical reflection on the media; and iii) the ethical question, since often the limits imposed on the production of users cannot be entirely clear.

If these are not sufficient reasons to talk about the role of media literacy in the new communicative scenarios, we will add to these points the specific aspects of the business world related to the global society. If on an individual level people have a set of skills that allow them to utilize and leverage content that ICT and media provide them, knowing the influence and using these skills in a business context is particularly interesting for the future of people. In the end, the reality is we

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