

Chapter 29

The Role of New Media in Contemporary Entertainment Culture

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ABSTRACT

New media technologies have become an important part of our everyday lives and are predominantly shaping our perceptions. Increased usage of Internet has changed every aspect of our everyday lives. Other new media technologies make the impact of this change even more intense. This chapter provides a review of the academic and popular literature on the relationship between new media and contemporary entertainment practices. It investigates the new tools and ways (such as social networking sites, online retail environments, and online video streaming options) utilized to communicate and entertain. These environments are dynamic, intercultural, and allow for instant information sharing. This chapter focuses on how these environments are alternative to traditional communication contexts and how the new media shapes the entertainment culture.

INTRODUCTION

Information travels instantly around the world. New technologies such as the Internet help people from all around the world to interconnect. Furthermore, Internet provides its users a foundation to reshape conventional media as well as their consumption behavior. Mass audiences of 1990s have become fragmented audience for today's entertainment industry. This shift from mass audience to fragmented audience communities has made the entertainment and media industries more competitive. Moreover, the fragmentation among audiences has led producers to consider new ap-

proaches. As a result, conventional media applications have merged with new media technologies to provide a better user experience. Jenkins (2006) states this phenomenon as the 'convergence of the traditional and new media forms'.

The increasing convergence of communication technologies has made the boundaries between traditional and new media almost invisible (Jenkins, 2006; Kioussis, 2002). The integration of the old and new media brings new approaches to production methods for the entertainment industry, as well as new dimensions to user experience. Scholars argue that new media applications have transformed the passive viewers of traditional

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media to active and participant users (Poster, 2008; Srinivasan, 2012; Langlois, 2013). Today's viewers actively participate and engage in creating and shaping contents (Bruns, 2008; Jenkins, 2006).

The shift from traditional media to new media has influenced people's media consumption in many aspects (Flanagin & Metzger, 2001). In today's culture, producers consider transmedia productions that allow higher audience immersion, rather than using a traditional media practices. It is not only producers, but also the audience who prefer transmedia applications. As a result of this shift, a new relationship between the producer and the audience has been established. For instance, today, both producers and audience mostly use the Internet as the primary platform for entertainment applications. Furthermore, they utilize it in conjunction with other, traditional and new, communication technologies. Because of the wide use of technologies and media in conjunction with each other, media have become an ever-increasing important part of people's everyday lives, and are predominantly shaping our perceptions. In other words, the impact of media on people's lives is even more intense than ever.

We observe that, in the light of changes in the communication technologies, and with the emergence of the Internet, the passive audience of traditional media has become active participants. New media technologies allow viewers interact, engage, and respond to the content instantly. Consequently, their opinions and feedbacks have a significant impact on production processes in the entertainment industry. Producers need to consider these feedbacks, and develop content accordingly in order to maintain the satisfaction of contemporary audience. In other words, increasing audience participation and the content created in new media technologies force the entertainment industry to adapt new approaches.

Various uses and aspects of new media technologies have been widely discussed by scholars. Some studies criticized the surveillance, and social

control aspect of the new media technologies (Kellner, 2003). Although new media technologies provide powerful forms of social control and surveillance, this chapter's focus is new media applications to create today's entertainment environment. Furthermore, this chapter provides a review of the academic and popular literature on the relationship between new media and entertainment practices of both the producers and the audience. It investigates the new tools and ways utilized (such as social networking sites, online games, online retail environments, and online video streaming options) by various participants to communicate and entertain. These environments are dynamic, intercultural, and allow for instant information-sharing. This chapter focuses on how these environments provide a more viable alternative to traditional communication methods; and how the new media shapes the entertainment culture.

BACKGROUND

The progressive and innovative nature of new media applications affects today's entertainment culture directly. Conventional communication tools are no longer useful unless they are interconnected with new technologies. The impact of new media in today's world is inevitable. However defining what new media are is still a challenge. Although, new media have been discussed for the last couple decades, a clear definition has not been emerged yet.

The first uses of the term new media can be found as early as the second half of the 20th century, by Marshall McLuhan. McLuhan uses the term to describe technical characteristics such as electronic information gathering and global reach (Peters, 2009). Although, McLuhan's focus is not the new media, as we understand today, his assessments address today's discourse.

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