

Virtual Reality and Cyberspace: An Approximation from the Virtual Culture

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Abstract - *The way of thinking about visuals of a determined society and its relationship with culture have given way to the development of a line of investigation that is directed toward visual culture. The reproduction of images at a global scale has been facilitated as a consequence of the development of photography, television, computers and to this moment the Internet. Certainly, the development of the Internet has exceeded the frontiers of space and time. The visual means have been enhanced, giving way to the generation of a dependency of an image to present reality. It is necessary to continue the efforts in terms of analysis and investigation to determine the effect that visuality has on culture and how it is affected as well as how social relations are affected. It is also necessary to establish new theories that can help in the understanding of the role of images in the communication media, and the visual configuration of cyberspace as a new public space.*

Key Words: technology, communication, virtual-reality, cyberspace, culture

1. INTRODUCTION

The way of thinking about visuals of a determined society and its relationship with culture have given way to the development of a line of investigation that is directed toward visual culture. Traditionally, culture is transferred through oral communication, even though the development of the printing press and later on in the XIX century newspapers had an impact in pointing out the importance of letters in print, and in specific literature as a mechanism of communication.

The newspapers and magazines benefit with the development of photography, which manages its acceptance as a visual illustration complement. Without doubt, photography has an important relevance in the social and political life of a country, because it forms an essential part in the confection of a newspaper. The images are not limited just to occupy a physical space on a page, they convey a series of messages. Being so, photography and images in general are being analyzed and studied within the context of the column to which they make reference to, without leaving aside the impact that the image has by itself. This provides us with an initial perception of everyday life, which is completed up to a certain point, during the XIX century, by television and movies. A proliferation of images that enhance the visuality of images in the communication media is proliferated.

With the upcoming of television and its development another media that has great impact on the exciting communication medias that were already developed comes up. This development comes up as the effect of the expansion of computers in the decades of the '80 and '90 such as the internet surge with the development of ArpaNET, a project with military use in the government of the United States. It is not until universities have access to this technology that a greater number of people also gain access to this technology. This marks the moment in which the web becomes the web of webs and also a new media of communication.

The reproduction of images at a global scale has been facilitated as a consequence of the development of photography, television, computers and to this moment the Internet. Certainly, the development of the Internet has exceeded the frontiers of space and time. The fact of writing an e-mail address, a message, and sending it; supposes a process of instantaneousness in which it does not matter how far the subject receptor is, the message will be received instantly or almost instantly.

Consequently, the search for instantaneousness manifests the importance of velocity in terms of how quick images are transmitted within a society. This is an example of Paul Virilio's conceptualization of velocity, in which he states that velocity is the center of everything [1]. The immediacy in which the events are presented is a consequence of the technological developments.

It is thought in technology, in cultural terms as the search for a better quality of life, the search for wellbeing [2]. It can then be stated and affirmed that velocity, that search for immediacy, is the accelerating factor in the development of technology, that enables wellbeing in a society.

2. TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIETY

Once the relevance that technological development has for societies is analyzed, visuality within the communication media can be understood. The research conducted regarding image-society has gained relevance within cultural studies. A suggested definition for visual culture is understanding it as the study of image and its relationship to society, this is, the understanding the social- historical value in determined epoch; is comprised of design, drawings, paintings, movies, corporeal art, television, architecture and others [3].

The implications that the technological changes have on images is a research topic for theorists like Walter Benjamin, Marshall McLuhan, and Jean Baudrillard. Given the importance the Internet has as a means of communication, it is seen then as a means for transmitting and shearing images. In Walter Benjamin's essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", he states that the reproduction is a crucial aspect of modernity [4]. This reproduction has had an effervescent point with the development of the Internet.

The ability of image reproduction and how it is capable of overcoming time limits are the result of what McLuhan calls "global tribe". In this "global tribe" the reproduction of images through newspapers, magazines, radio, and movies is transmitted through cable system, and satellites, or Internet giving way to message globalization. Every time the message, in this case images, become more accessible to a greater number of persons.

Consequently, Jean Baudrillard reviews McLuhan's ideas as he theorizes about the relation between images and reality perceptions. One of the most relevant assertions of Baudrillard in his approach to reality, is that it has been substituted by images. He asserts about social aspects and how these are based on a false reality, that is to say, a mock approach of it [5]. Under this premise the images about events that are observed through the television are a reflection of the mock approach itself, a manipulated projection of the event. It then can be argued that the Internet is a means in which globalization of the technical reproductivity of images reaches incalculable levels never before.

This new media that has the capacity of achieving the inclusion of the radio, the newspaper and television, in other words visual and audio-visual, and presents the capacity to expand this "false reality" that is manipulated through images.

The flow of information through the internet; news, text messages, images through the media, web pages, social media, and instant messaging have given way to the development of a concept known as "cyberspace". A place presented as a nonphysical territory, interactive and multidirectional. This cyberspace rises as the result of the development of the Internet, and the effort of some persons, from programmers to graphic designers, who invest their time in the development of Web applications. This space has permitted individuals to occupy a protagonist role. An example of this are the so called "influencers" in the different social webs.

The Internet would be like a global theatre, without scenery, spectators, only actors [6]. This is how a new social scenario is created, in which messages and images are discussed and exchanged giving way to what has been denominated as Cyberspace a space of interaction through a web of computers. Social space product. Of the flow of information

through a web of different users [7]. This definition presents the cyberspace as a place in which you act but do not inhabit, you transit or move in it. The cyberspace surges as the development of the technology and at the same time, has developed into a new public space of discussion of ideas, expression, and organization of social debate.

Consequently, you cannot underestimate the cultural value that cyberspace has as a discussion forum for interchanging of ideas, literary expression or textual, but as a means of interchanging ideas. The importance of cyberspace is found in the interchanging of images. It is there where visual culture becomes important in cyberspace. The flexibility and the accessibility permits the development of visual communication strategies that transcend the physical and local frontiers. Their impact in social relations, in the interchanging of information posts the structural bases on which the cyberspace is generated. The cyberspace is not premeditatedly created, it arises as a result to a series of developments in terms of electronic engineering, and computer programming, as well as other related created disciplines.

To understand the social relations that are generated in the interchanging of information within the cyberspace a given step or multinumber of investigations and studies must be conducted. The implications it has on social life outside of the cyberspace is the object of analysis. To be more exact, the intent is to establish certain criteria that permits the measurement of the impact that cyberspace has on the individual once the computer is turned off.

Different studies about the impact that videogames have on children and youngsters have provided relevant data to suggest a level of persuasion and stimuli through computers that these have on the individual. The manipulation of senses, first of all visual and auditive through computers and digital environments is generated. As a result, or consequence of this, there is a merge between individual - machine in which the individual ends up losing the perspective of his or her reality, to later on, enter the dominium of virtual reality. It arises as a space perception, but is not limited to it, given that it envelopes the manipulation. Once the individual is capable of deciding and controlling the direction within the simulated environment the mailable character in the virtual reality is manifested.

The manipulation of the senses and the effect that the virtual reality generates over the perception, promotes a sensation of reality. According to this, the development of graphic cards is able to generate images in movement of high resolution changing with the developments of monitors. These developments have enabled us to take the virtual reality sensations experiences closer to realistic sensations.

3. CONCLUSIONS

The effect that the environment mediates through the computer over the individual and his or her conceptualization of "reality", in the precise moment in which he or she is immersed in the experiences of virtual reality, proposes the existence of the paradox about reality. If reality for the individual is an immediate reality, these are the events, that happen within the simulated environment; even though the other individual outside the environment would be completely sure of his or her position, regarding the simulated reality. In this case a relative reality is proposed, in which the notion of reality depends of the space that the individual occupies. This is, his or her position within and without the environment of virtual reality.

Technological development throughout history has given way to new modes and forms of communication. The visual means have been enhanced, giving way to the generation of a dependency of an image to present reality. It is necessary to continue the efforts in terms of analysis and investigation to determine the effect that visuality has on culture and how it is affected as well as how social relations are affected. It is also necessary to establish new theories that can help in the understanding of the role of images in the communication media, and the visual configuration of cyberspace as a new public space.

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