

Smartphones' effect on our lives

Modern technology, specifically the smartphone, has become a fundamental part of society. Smartphones make incredibly useful devices accessible to billions of people. Its wide variety of uses include communication, such as texting or calling, entertainment, such as social media, information, through search engines, and many more. Although the premise of these tools appears beneficial to users, in reality, the creators of some apps, especially social media, designed them to be immensely addictive. The majority of smartphone users spend countless hours on their devices each week.¹ Smartphones are integral in many of our habits and routines, such as scrolling through your notifications upon waking up, completing an activity, such as painting, while a movie plays in the background, or checking not only their own social media, but also the influencers, and many close friends' platforms regularly.

While technology rapidly evolved in the 21st century, many physical resources such as books or notes have been moved online due to the internet's convenience and ability to save money and resources. Larry Rosen, one of the California State University psychology professors comments on the issue, recognizing that, "much of the attentional resource that we devoted to our personal ecosystem has been shifted to what's virtual."² Furthermore, smartphones have changed the way we process information and can lower abilities to complete basic tasks to their

¹ Hartmans, A. (2018, February 17). These are the sneaky ways apps like Instagram, Facebook, Tinder lure you in and get you 'addicted'. Retrieved from <https://www.businessinsider.com/how-app-developers-keep-us-addicted-to-our-smartphones-2018-1#instagram-sends-dozens-of-push-notifications-each-week-and-uses-stories-to-attract-you-1>

² Bhattacharjee, Y. (2021, May 03). Smartphones revolutionize our lives-but at what cost? Retrieved from <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/article/smartphones-revolutionize-our-lives-but-at-what-cost>

true fulfillment.³ A study conducted by Adrian Ward which included 800 participants tasked them to complete a set of simple mental challenges such as continuing a pattern, completing a math problem, or memorizing numbers or letters.⁴ None of these tasks needed a smartphone and they played no role in any task. Each participant was asked to place their smartphone either in a different room, in their pocket, or on the table in front of them. Not surprisingly, those who left their phone in a different room scored the best, while those with their phones in front of them scored the worst. Those with their phones in their pocket had a lower score compared to the subjects without their phone within reaching distance.⁵ These results bring a large amount of worry surrounding the impacts technology may have on not only our own generation, but future generations as well.

Studies have evinced technology's potential to damage a person's capability to think for themselves.⁶ Larry Rosen, a psychology professor, states he has "seen in the last six to eight years is a massive paradigm shift." This "paradigm shift" concerns how much more teenagers, and

³ Bhattacharjee, Y. (2021, May 03). Smartphones revolutionize our lives-but at what cost? Retrieved from <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/article/smartphones-revolutionize-our-lives-but-at-what-cost>

⁴ Ward, A. F., Search for more articles by this author, Duke, K., Gneezy, A., & Bos, M. W. (2017, April 01). Brain Drain: The Mere Presence of One's Own Smartphone Reduces Available Cognitive Capacity: Journal of the Association for Consumer Research: Vol 2, No 2. Retrieved from <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/691462>

⁵ Ward, A. F., Search for more articles by this author, Duke, K., Gneezy, A., & Bos, M. W. (2017, April 01). Brain Drain: The Mere Presence of One's Own Smartphone Reduces Available Cognitive Capacity: Journal of the Association for Consumer Research: Vol 2, No 2. Retrieved from <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/691462>

⁶ Bhattacharjee, Y. (2021, May 03). Smartphones revolutionize our lives-but at what cost? Retrieved from <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/article/smartphones-revolutionize-our-lives-but-at-what-cost>

even people of all ages, use their smartphone devices significantly more in modern days. This raises a major worry of losing conversational capability and overall conversational skills. On top of this worry, the convenience of technology has caused boredom to become more prevalent.⁷ Although at first this may be surprising, smartphones have shortened attention spans by making information quickly accessible. Smartphones are extremely addicting making them hard to set aside for any moment. Compulsive behavior has been on the rise because of smartphones. Even though apps allow users to see the amount of time spent on a particular screen, many users continually ignore this notification and continue using their devices without care. The average amount of times one picks up their smartphone has risen around 30% in just two years, from 56 pickups in 2016 to 73 in 2018.⁸

Considering the abundance of apps and different sources of entertainment that can be found on a smartphone, it is not surprising that so many people want to own one and easily become addicted. The world as we know it is rapidly changing and each day brings new technological discoveries. These new findings can lead to astounding discoveries and improve humanity on the surface-level, but people's dependence on them has taken an internal toll on humans which integrally affects our livelihoods. Although smartphones are a great all-around tool, the invention has not been entirely positive mentally. There is no "right" answer as to if smartphones are good or bad, but it is certainly a topic that needs to be discussed and researched. Although smartphones can be addicting, in small quantities of time, they can help many people worldwide.

⁷ Illing, S. (2019, May 02). Bored and lonely? Blame your phone. Retrieved from <https://www.vox.com/recode/2019/5/2/18510958/social-media-addiction-boredom-loneliness-society-technology-smart-phones>

⁸ Turner, A. How Many People Have Smartphones Worldwide (Sept 2021). Retrieved from <http://www.bankmycell.com/blog/how-many-phones-are-in-the-world>