

# CONSENT AND DIGITAL COMMUNICATION IN THE AGE OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES. BETWEEN TECHNOLOGICAL EFFICIENCY AND THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN VALUES

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## Abstract

This article analyses the impact of the use of new technologies on digital communication, with a special focus on the degradation of human values, the modification of interpersonal relationships and the legal problems generated by the processing of personal data in the online environment. Digital communication, facilitated by social media, smart devices, and artificial intelligence, has become a central element of everyday life, profoundly influencing the way individuals interact, express themselves, and build their social identity. The study highlights the tension between technological efficiency and the loss of the human dimension of communication, in particular by replacing verbal and non-verbal language with digital symbols, emojis and standardized reactions. From a legal perspective, the article examines the issue of user consent in the context of social media platforms, highlighting its often flawed, formal or insufficiently informed character, in relation to the requirements imposed by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). At the same time, the risks associated with cybersecurity, digital surveillance and the economic exploitation of personal data are analysed, as well as the limits of the current European regulatory framework, including the Digital Services Act. The conclusion underlines the need for a more rigorous and efficient regulation of the digital environment, ensuring an authentic balance between technological progress, the protection of fundamental rights and the preservation of essential human values.

**Keywords:** *digital communication; consent; data protection; GDPR; social networks; human values; digital regulation; Digital Services Act.*

Undoubtedly, technology is leading to changes in our personal and professional lives. The development of technology has led to increased surveillance and privacy issues. Personal data can be easily collected and exploited. Digital communication involves the transmission and reception of data through electronic devices and networks. Digital communication has become the main pillar of our daily interactions. Digital communication is almost instantaneous.

Technology has brought about a revolutionary transformation in the way we communicate with each other. Technology has introduced new ways of communicating, such as email, instant messaging, video calls, conferencing, and social media, leading to an increase in the lack of face-to-face communication. Instant messages and text messages can be sent and received in seconds, making communication faster and more efficient. We communicate shorter and more informally when texting or writing online.

Technologies are making communication easier, people are communicating over long distances more frequently than before, and there has been a shift from face-to-face meetings to virtual communications. Today, digital communication has become more important than ever. Digital communication allows us to instantly share photos, videos, and stories. Some argue that technology has led to a decrease in face-to-face interactions and an increase in online communication, which can in turn lead to a decrease in empathy and social skills. Digital communication has introduced new forms of abbreviations, slang and emojis, some of which have been added to official dictionaries. More than ever before, we rely on digital technologies in order to stay connected. The Internet has both connected us and divided us like nothing before.

Human relationships evolve rapidly through the use of electronic means. eSIM technology is changing global connectivity; Smart watches and smart glasses (wearable technology) make digital communication perfect. In this digital age, the world is increasingly communicating with emoticons that look like cave drawings. Non-verbal communication takes place on social

media; it uses only non-verbal speech and this represents a symptom of a lack of verbal intelligence. Today, digital cave paintings and emoticons are used to express feelings and thoughts. And most of them only use smileys and GIFs (Graphics Interchange Format, a way to react on social networks without words). In various posts or comments on Facebook, Twitter and other networks, as well as in many newspaper texts, the use of digital sign writing is encouraged. Millennials have grown up with smartphones and the internet, with a stronger connection to technology. This generation seems to be completely lacking when it comes to face-to-face interaction, tactful communication, and eye contact. They experience real discomfort when separated from their devices and are less comfortable with the non-digital conversation.

One of the main challenges is that non-verbal cues such as facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice can be difficult to convey accurately through digital means. This can lead to misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and a lack of emotional connection in digital communication. It seems that the cyber generation understands non-verbal digital communication better than meaningful text or speech. On Instagram, photos are dominant, while on Facebook, you have it all, where it is imperative to show a fake version of the perfect self, and on Twitter celebrities shed their wisdom and where the election campaign is taking place (in the U.S.-TikTok in Europe). People most of the time read only short texts, the rest are just images and emoticons. People, especially younger individuals, don't know how to relate to other people in real life. No eye contact, monotonous voice - almost like robots. Very scary. We need more education about the new technologies we use in our daily lives. Due to the lack of real communication, online communication has become increasingly dependent on emojis.

We use emojis to convey a range of emotions, from joy and love to frustration. Emoticons can be considered a humanized tool for emotional expressiveness that replaces the cues that are naturally present in face-to-face and vocal communications. Emoticons improve the understanding of messages and provide more fun for interaction, allowing for better

understanding; therefore, they are an expressive resource and are particularly useful for humans and machines (AI) in classifying sarcastic, non-sarcastic, positive, and negative messages. Emojis enhance text messages, emails, social media posts, and even professional communication, allowing people to express themselves more authentically. Emojis add emotion to formal conversations by clarifying the tone of the written conversation. Emojis on social media have significantly increased engagement. Brands that use emojis in their marketing messages are considered more accessible and relatable.

Emojis add emotion, personality, and a human touch to digital conversations. But emojis can't represent a complete substitute for words, especially in situations where precise communication is essential. When we rely on digital communication, we miss out on non-verbal cues such as tone, facial expressions, and body language, which are vital to fully understanding the emotions of others. Touch is important for our emotional lives, and in ways that the finger-focused haptics of our digital devices can't satisfy. The cool and stylish touch screen of a smartphone simply cannot replace the soft and warm skin of another man. Smell is a really important clue for social communication, and this is something that is not implemented in any technology we use today. For adults, this can mean less satisfying social lives, but for a generation of children who are increasingly socialized through technology, the effects could be severe.

The advancement of technology has fulfilled some of the society's goals and, at the same time, has had a great impact on human values and ethics.

Here are the advantages of technology in communication:

- ✓ Speed and time - instant and efficient,
- ✓ Elimination of wires and cables,
- ✓ Allowance of remote communications.
- ✓ Mass communication,
- ✓ Reduced costs and time,
- ✓ Expansion of coverage areas.

The negative impacts of technology in communication are the following:

- ✓ Illegal use and dependence on technology,
- ✓ Non-social life,

- ✓ A pervasive distraction,
- ✓ Technology weakens family relationships,
- ✓ Misinterpretation,
- ✓ Poor communication skills.

While some forms of technology have brought positive changes to the world, there are also various negative effects of technology and of its overuse. The excessive use of social media and mobile devices has been linked to eye strain, difficulties, and depression. Technology has also allowed people to find their voice and express themselves through social media. And at the same time, technological innovation contributes to the moral decline of human values among the global population. We hide our true feelings by responding with emoticons and emojis. Virtual messages, emails, chats or emoticons cannot convey our authentic emotions. If we think that we can make a difference and want to touch someone's life, we need to talk to them personally.

Hugging someone is much more effective than sending a virtual message with an emoji to present a hug; our voice conveys our authentic emotions, not emojis. The virtual world is emotionless and untouchable. The real world is still a world of feelings. By communicating face-to-face, we can express ourselves more freely and naturally, and we can see reactions, gestures and facial expressions – real contact. We lose the art of conversation. People are constantly multitasking through emails, text messages, or social media posts; We don't offer our brain the chance to stop. Children learn conversation through messages that can be edited and modified at the expense of learning the art of real conversation in real time with a person in front of them. The vocabulary we have is increasingly restricted, the focus interval is getting shorter and shorter, and people prefer to stay in their comfort zone and not get into the conversation, even though the internet connects people from all over the world.

On the internet, portals are mostly dominated by short texts; The title is sensational and often longer than the text, which no one reads. Today, emoticons are the pinnacle of eloquence, and the entire arsenal of emoticons and GIFs represents a rich "language" with which people express their feelings in a "sophisticated" manner. Social

media (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) offers the greatest opportunities to spread nonsense. Today, everyone thinks that they deserve unimaginable attention. Being cold, selfish, and self-centred is inscribed, while being good has long been outside. And such people do much better with emoticons; They have difficulty with words. New technologies have not contributed to the collapse of human values and general madness, but they have awakened the primitive in humans.

The digital world has a negative impact on communication. We share opinions on social media with a wider audience, but another major change is that there is no filter in the way we speak. And the risks involved in information communication associated with the use of technology are the following: security threats and cybersecurity attack. That is why the advice given by the people who join these social networks must be unvitiated. The increasing connectivity of devices makes them susceptible to cyber threats, including hacking, phishing, malware, ransomware, privacy issues, data collection, and tracking.

Digital Act Service must also be amended in order to impose rules, restrictions and penalties for companies that operate in social media.

But the reason for our degrading moral values cannot be explained by science. We have our own intellect and senses to judge what is right and what is wrong. Technology has changed ethics in the sense that it has affected our general culture and perceived norms of behaviour. While some forms of technology have brought positive changes to the world, there are also some negative ones. Perhaps humanity is not ready for such rapid technological progress. Technological progress is not the only factor contributing to the diseases of our society, but it is also a major factor in what could be the end of our civilization as we know it in the relatively near future.

The use and control of access to technology is undoubtedly our greatest existential threat. The main challenges that we still have to overcome in this area include: nuclear warfare, genetic modification of ourselves and other species, biological warfare and artificial intelligence. The ones who could have access to potentially destructive technology represent the most

important actors. We need systems to regulate this. Most people don't realize what they're consenting to when using social media apps. The GDPR is flawed and circumvented by organizations in the field.

Technology is unstoppable and therefore more attention should be paid to the difference between increasing the improvement of our lives and the negative impact of certain innovations. We should ask ourselves the following question: Where have human values and everything that determines the human species disappeared?

Digital communication should improve our lives, not define them, and it is essential to remember the importance of balance. By paying attention to the use of our technology and setting boundaries, we can ensure that we maintain and hone our interpersonal skills in this digital age.

The bottom line is that we need true regulations for social media apps and the impact on consent and impact on users' lives needs to be carefully studied.

For the bibliographical references please address to the author.