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The Cost We Are All Paying

One pressing issue that is easily overlooked is the amount of time that is being spent on an electronic device. I see it everywhere I go whether it is while I am driving, sitting in class, or walking in a public place. For the fifteenth week project, I chose to observe Starbucks because that is a place where a range of age groups are allowed and is a business that is frequently busy. Despite the positive impact that advances in technology have had towards society, I believe that we are overlooking at the harm it is causing. During my fifteen week observations at Starbucks, it is obvious that technology has consumed our daily life and it is going to continue to negatively impact us if we do not make an effort to limit our daily usage and find a solution to this crisis which may consist of fines being implemented, parents becoming more strict on their children and possibly setting a feature on our devices that blocks us from using it after a certain period.

Beginning with customers walking into Starbucks, some would walk in talking to someone over the phone or texting. Once they have received their beverage, the person would be glued onto their screen for the remainder of time that was spent inside Starbucks. This is a common scenario because of how accessible a phone or laptop has become. We have went from the first computer weighting more than 25 tons during the 1940's to an iPhone weighing 4.55 ounces which is essentially a laptop. With these advances, there is no doubt that the majority of humans will invest a large amount of money and a significant amount of time on their device.

The downfall in these advances is that people are being controlled and are not occupying their free time wisely. This is a far greater issue that occurs outside of Starbucks because we can see technology negatively consuming a person's time wherever we go. While I was in Starbucks I also saw the majority of people with earphones which disconnected them from the world even more. Besides from what occurs being closed doors, we see the usage of technology everywhere we go such as school, while driving, walking around a shopping center, going out to eat, etc. For the most part, I do think that a large amount of the population would agree on how harmful our devices have towards us but are not taking the initiative in making a change.

It is important to become aware of Internet Use Disorder (IUD) and Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD) which is a fairly new phenomenon but is a relevant issue in today's society. These disorders are defined as “serious problem involving the inability to control use of various kinds of technology, in particular the Internet, smartphones, tablets and social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram” (*Technology Addiction*). This is something that pertains to the 15 week observation at Starbucks because I saw the majority of the people on some form of electronic device. It almost appears to be a room full of zombies who are not aware of their surroundings due to how attached that are to their devices.

Furthermore, by observing people at Starbucks, it is apparent that we are connected online but when it comes to sitting in a room full of people, there is a disconnection among people. According to the Washington Post, “teens are spending more than one-third of their day using media such as online video or music”, which shows how wasteful we can become when managing our time online. Although there are some ways in which technology can be beneficial, the younger age groups have a tough time managing their time on their devices.

Additionally, people being attached to their technological devices, the issue of texting and driving has become more relevant. We may see many car accidents on the side of the road whether it is on the highway or a residential area. As an article in *The Daily Mail* emphasizes that “26 per cent of pileups are blamed on drivers using cell phones”, which may not seem like a large percentage but if using a phone while driving may cost a life, I do think that people should avoid cell phone usage when they are behind the wheel.

Many will argue that advances in technology outweigh the negative. Companies that are making new technological devices will not see an issue, let alone advertise the negative aspect of technology because that would cause for a decline in selling their product. It is understandable from a business perspective to not mention the negative aspects which is why as consumers, people should become more aware of what they are purchasing. Several other people will argue that technology has improved our communication skills due to the availability to message people around the world. To refute that argument, at the University of California Los Angeles, a group of students majoring in psychology came to the conclusion that “the displacement of in-person social interaction by screen interaction seems to be reducing social skills” which supports the argument of our technological devices causing more harm than we are aware of. In addition, Patricia Greenfield, a professor of psychology at University of California Los Angeles, embedded in the article that “many people are looking at the benefits of digital media in education, and not many are looking at the costs” (*In our digital world, are young people losing the ability to read emotions?*) Many of us have a tough time in realizing how much time we truly are wasting on our phone/tablet, considering the large amount of financial investment we put into those items. As stated in the article *Technology and Society*, “humans use technology to travel, to

communicate, to learn, to do business and to live in comfort”, which shows how we are constantly surrounded by some form of electronic device. It is evident that advances in medicine have tremendously improved due to technology. With “at least 100,000 Americans live with an upper-arm amputation, and 6 million others [whom are] paralyzed”, it is necessary for researchers to step in and make some changes to help the people who are forced to endure such unfortunate circumstances (“Top 5 Advances in Medical Technology). These are instances in which advances in technology are not only helpful but essential to society because the development of artificial limbs and prosthetic devices have allowed for people to progress. Rather than being confined to being at home, advances in medical technology are in fact bettering the world we live in. There is nothing wrong with using technology but it starts to become an issue when someone is spending hours on an app that is not beneficial. There are some people who will argue that technology is not a bad thing for several reasons. For example, advances in technology has allowed for improvements in medicine which is true but it becomes an issue when teenagers are spending hours scrolling through social media or video games that is taking away from their academics or wanting to do “kid” things. Technology is doing harm to the youth that is being overlooked. Beginning with “toddlers [being] handed their parents’ cellphones and tablets to entertain themselves when they should be observing...and interacting with their caregivers” (*Screen Addiction Is Taking a Toll on Children*). Studies have shown that children under the age of 2 should not be exposed to large amounts of technology because it is during that time when the brain is beginning to develop and interactions with other humans is beneficial. It is easy for a child to be given a tablet to prevent from the tantrums but there are long term harmful effects in handing over a technological device to serve as a distraction. I think

that technology can be a good thing if it is being monitored the only issue is that the older we get, we do not have the “adult” figure telling us to shut it off. Instead, we allow for our devices to consume us. The greatest argument towards the issue of technology consuming our daily life is that there are some people who are putting it to great use such as students doing homework. Unfortunately, by having so much information accessible with a few clicks on a screen, that allows for “ them to compile an entire roster of facts by copying and pasting without actually having to understand or analyse the information” (Are Students Becoming Too Reliant to Technology) which becomes an issue when test taking since the student did not truly retain the information taught in class. I will agree that technology is something inevitable for our future but as advances are occurring every day, it is important to have those times when we are not attached to our electronic devices.

There are a few solutions to this issue that have to become effective in order to help ease the electronic usage dilemma. Something as simple as parents modeling better time usage during their free time can improve a child’s choice in occupying their downtime. As Mark Nielsen , a professor at the University of Queensland in Australia states that, “scientists have been finding this odd effect where children will copy everything that they see an adult demonstrate”, which is more commonly known as the modeling behavior. By parents limiting their electronic usage, children may chose to spend their free time elsewhere such as playing outside or reading a book. At a young age, children are known for modeling those around them so it is important for parents to implement healthy habits. As far as the texting and driving there is already a penalty of paying a higher fee for car insurance if a police officer catches someone in the act. Another possibility could be suspending the criminals driving license if the person has been fined more than once for

driving and being on their phone. In recent times, the company Apple has installed a new feature to their iPhones where it can detect when someone is in a vehicle which immediately shuts down any notifications. In return, the driver is not notified of any new messages or phone calls which allows for the driver to give their full attention to the road. This update can help drivers from getting the urge to go on their phone when they hear it ring or a notification noise turn on.

Another positive change that should be applied to many if not all devices in a household is a timer set for the amount of time that is spent on a device. Fortunately, there are hundreds of apps that offer the feature of monitoring that amount of time that is spent on a phone/tablet. Although the allotted time that is allowed will be subjective to each household, I do think that putting an app like so put to use can benefit us in being more mindful of where we spend our free time when it comes to phone usage.

All in all, I do believe that technology has allowed for society to progress but many people fail to see how dependant we have become towards it. With the observations that I made at Starbucks, it is apparent that I foresaw this issue on a minor scale. In reality, this issue is affecting every age group but is prominent throughout the teenagers. Luckily, there are some ways in which people can help ease this issue but it has to begin with people realizing that becoming attached to our electronic devices is a possibility. Although there are some ways in which we have tried to reduce our usage, it is important to keep in mind when we are using it in a progressive way and when its usage is not benefitting us such as scrolling through social media and spending hours on a video games.

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