

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL FOUNDATIONS TOWARDS TECHNOPHILIA AND TECHNOFOBIA

Jalil Fallad¹, Eva Judith Hueso¹, Daniel Edén Ramírez¹

¹Universidad de Guadalajara, Autlán de Navarro, Jalisco, México, jfallad@cucsur.udg.mx, jhueso@cucsur.udg.mx; daniel.ramirez@cucsur.udg.mx

INTRODUCTION

Jay (1981, p 41; cited by Brosnan, 1998) had defined technophobia as resistance to talking about computers or even thinking about computers. This expert had also defined it as “fear or anxiety towards computers” and “hostile or aggressive thoughts about computers”. More recently Rosen and Weil (1990) have defined technophobia as “anxiety about current or future interactions with computers or computer-related technology”. But these definitions are not only applied to computers, they are also applied to some other technologies as basic as wrist watches (Norman, 1988). Technophobia is not only related to computer use; it is dealing with all ways where technology is involved such as Biotechnology or any other form of technology.

METHODOLOGY

The present paper is dealing with the Technophilia and the Technophobia. For this task, a set of different paper and theories are reviewed in order to provide a new consistent theoretical framework for these phenomena.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Technophobia isn't a disease that requires medical attention. It's a general term describing an attitude or reaction that produces symptoms of anxiety. Human resources training managers can learn to recognize the signs: rejection of new gadgets, reluctance to learn, ineffectiveness on the job and increased absenteeism. The phobia prevents 75 percent of employees from using information technology properly. Most people bumble along, using only 10 to 25 percent of the capabilities of any software program. And an

astounding 75 percent secretly wonder "What's software, anyhow?" (Boles & Paik, 1998).

Technophobia phenomenon occurs almost everywhere where technology is present; in private sector as well as in public sector. In private sector we can include industries like large chain of supermarkets, enterprises like accounting and health clinics, service businesses like travel agencies among others. In public sector, schools, law enforcement agencies, libraries (Crawford & Norman, 1995).

The theory of Diffusion of Innovation provides an alternative theoretical explanation that it may explains why people differentially embraces new technology when it is implemented for the use of the consumer which this is the case of the current study (Rogers, 1962). By this theory, it is usual that the new idea or innovation to move slowly through a social group as it as it is introduced from the beginning. Under the precepts of this theory is possible to identify members of these five kinds of consumers. Consumers who had been identified as leaders could be match to innovators consumers. Passive participants could be identified as Laggards. The rest of participants of the study could be identified either Early adopters, Early Majority or Late Majority.

But Technophobia is one part of people's technology perception; there is also Technophilia. In the book of Ellen Ullman "*Close to the Machine: Technophilia and its Discontents*" (Ullman, 1997). The author does not define "*Technophilia*", but it is apparently referring to an obsession with technology, specifically computer technology, perhaps more accurately called "*Technomania*." Ullman reveals the compulsive, irrational character of technology, despite the fact that computer programming. Technomania also

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suggests the euphoric embrace of technology, as illustrated by the frenetic advertising and articles in Wired Magazine, the bible of technology's most enthusiastic devotees. On the other end of Technomania (with the nerd as the most extreme case) is technophobia.

Some experts suggest that technophobia has a cultural basis (Brosnan, 1998). About gender, a general perception about technology is more related towards males rather than females. Gender and technophobia become important issue because, as some authors suggest, more female are technophobes. For instance, Kantrowitz & Rosenberg (1994) reported that 37% of women and 27% of men are technophobic (Harler, 1995). But in general, computer culture is created, defined and controlled by men. Women often feel about as welcome as a system crash (Kantrowitz & Rosenberg, 1994). Brosnan suggests that there is no enough scientific evidence toward female technophobia. The existing evidence is based in the assumption the technology has a military primary use (Brosnan, 1998). An example of cultural influences upon perception of technology is cited by Edwards (1990) who states that examples of technological developments tied to military uses are many. There are three major reasons for the complexity: the attempt to make a single device do too many things; the need to have a single machine sufficient for every person in the world; and the business model of the computer industry. Technophobia is designer's fault; they design technology into complexity. Norman considers technology a double-edged sword (Norman, 1999). It can both enhance and diminish our lives.

Technophobia involves also age as well as social and economic status of technology users. But, personal computer is a product of technology that is too young to claim the title of having had the most impact on twentieth-century American society and to the present century, but some believe that it will soon prove to be more influential in important ways than even television.

CONCLUSIONS

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Technophobia and Technophilia are not in the edges on how people perceive technology. Technophobia is the result of people's ignorance about emerging technology. Technophilia is the result about how technology can make our lives easier, which does not mean better. We would like to suggest an intermediate point between both perceptions, where we can use technology in order to increase our life's quality by discriminating and discarding those technologies that does not fit in our everyday lives but with a positive learning attitude towards emerging technology.

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