Interactive Media 3000 Word Essay

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What is Interactive Media?

I am going to begin my essay with a brief definition of the phrase Interactive Media;

"Interactive media is the integration of digital media including combinations of electronic text, graphics, moving images, and sound, into a structured digital computerised environment that allows people to interact with the data for appropriate purposes. The digital environment can include the Internet, telecoms and interactive digital television."

In the simplest of terms, Interactive media is any type of media that you can interact with. Whether it be a mobile phone, television or a website, as long as your interacting with a piece of digital technology, it then comes under the phrase Interactive Media.

How is Interactive Media Developing?

Interactive media is vastly developing each year, not only in the amount of users but also the amount of creators, inventors and developers. The scale of young people opting to take further education all around the world in areas such as media, means potential for new ideas and concepts which are already rapidly evolving and emerging every day, is going to be greater. Also with large media companies ever expanding and developing, not to mention newer and smaller companies starting every week, the demand for talented individuals with new ideas and up-to-date knowledge of software is becoming bigger and bigger. Which also leads to more people deciding to take courses such as Interactive Media in the first place. Interactive Media is an ever-expanding aspect of our ever-expanding society, and I strongly believe that certain people shouldn't be so ignorant to the fact and the world needs to advance further, especially in medial advances and research.

Being left wing myself and also a big consumer of digital technology it is still very hard to say just how advanced we may be within the next 100 years. My opinion, looking back on the advances in a little as 20 years, how computers have advanced, how telecommunication has advanced, video, camera, web and many mode modes of interactive media, I think within the next 100 years our whole civilization will be dominated by the digital revolution. I think people may become lazier as a result, more and more things will become easier via digital processes and computers will be capable of much more. I also feel that jobs will become more scarce increasing unemployment due to the simple fact that machines and computers can operate more precisely than a human being and that they are also more reliable.

Also something I wouldn't find too far fetched, is the idea of highly advanced technology, which could potentially be used in employment to take over the mundane rolls (maybe even unnecessary if technology were capable) such as factory workers and working on supermarket checkouts. Humans would normally do this, but being replaced by this newer technology would definitely increase unemployment, but

maybe then people can be used in more important and useful jobs. Even if you look now, you will notice supermarkets are already introducing 'self-service' checkouts, which do not require and person-to-person contact.

Also factories already base most of their processes through the use of machinery even though there are still thousands of factory workers employed every year to do jobs technology will eventually be able to do alone. Even more farfetched, and a long way off is the classic idea of flying cars. I do think that may cause a lot of extreme issues due to safety and such and if not thought about properly – ideas such as this one, which sound crazy now, may actually be possible in the future.

One of my reasoning's for this is quite simple but fair; when you look back at quite a few old films which are set in the future, I have often thought to myself that their expectations of what they thought the modern day would be like are way off. In many cases I have felt we are much more advanced than their expectations were. I also feel that in the rate that we have advanced in such a short space of time cannot just suddenly stop. I think we will carry on exceeding expectations and people will be discovering and creating more and more new inventions that may eventually be the downfall to our existence.

And although I haven't read into the theory much, I find the idea very intriguing that maybe eventually computers/robots will become so highly advanced that they will be able to think for their selves and make their own decisions. Maybe even so advanced that they can be programmed to feel emotion or to learn, in which case I would feel very uneased about what could occur from such a perfect non-human stronger race. There are also references to ideas like this in films such as Blade Runner and iRobot.

Sector of Discussion

This leads me on to talk about and discuss the area of interactive media that I have chosen to discuss. The area I have chosen is telecommunications and the development of mobile phones.

The reason why I have chosen to talk about mobile phones is that it is probably one of the fastest changing areas of interactive media to date, along with computers. It is an every day part of most peoples lives in the UK leaving a high demand on mobile technology development. Mobile phones in the last ten years have dramatically evolved from being a 1990's gigantic 'mobile telephone' with the fundamental function of calling only, to the modern day 'mobile phone multimedia device' which performs as expected the fundamental function of calling, but now on top of that we can expect text messaging, video calling, picture messaging, media messaging, video recording, photo taking, mp3, radio, Bluetooth and world wide web all on one tiny device. Also more and more phones to date such as the Cybershot by Sony Ericsson would even be considered more of a camera than a phone, as the camera quality is a good as that of a normal digital camera. I think this will progress further and further until the telecommunication itself is a minute function of an endless string of functions that the piece of technology can actually perform. This is already true within the UK, but more and more people are beginning to base their purchasing decisions on how good the additional functions are over anything else. I think this is one of the main reasons why the mobile phone technology has become so widely used around the world, simply because of all the novelty gadgets you get with the phone itself (along with the practicality of course), which is why people are constantly upgrading also.

With a 1.3 billion user market, no wonder companies are constantly developing and improving their products and coming up with better deals so that they can squeeze every possible penny they can out of us.

I will admit to being a sucker for gadgets and as soon as the latest phone or console is out, I'm guaranteed to want it, and in many cases will save up and buy it. This is similar to a huge amount of people out there, and we are the reasons why these companies continue to thrive and develop more and more advanced new and old technologies.

Examples of the Old and New

Nokia 3210:

The Nokia 3210 was a highly popular mobile phone, which was first launched in 1999. The phone offered a combination of cutting-edge (at the time of release) features such as vibrating ring alert, T9 (predictive text) and built-in antennas.

This phone included 3 games (one being a game called 'snake' which is still the most famous mobile phone game), changeable fascias and customisable ringtones that led to the 3210 being a very popular phone in the 15-25s age bracket.

I remember when this phone was released and I was desperate to have one. It is one of the most memorable phones of my childhood and was definitely the start of trying to attract more and more people to start using mobile phones. The next step was to add different functions over the next 8 years to produce what we are using today. Below I will give an example of the latest in mobile phone technology, the new Apple Mac Mobile Phone;

Apple Mac Phone:

To the right you will see instantly just how much mobiles phones have advanced within 8 years. Just from the picture you will notice the smoother design, use of metal and glass instead of plastic and the lack of buttons.

"iPhone combines three amazing products — a revolutionary mobile phone, a widescreen iPod with touch controls, and a breakthrough Internet communications device with desktop-class email, web browsing, maps, and searching — into one small and lightweight handheld device. iPhone also introduces an entirely new user interface based on a large multi-touch display and pioneering new software,

letting you control everything with just your fingers. So it ushers in an era of software power and sophistication never before seen in a mobile device, completely redefin ing what you can do on a mobile phone."

From the information above the iPhone is clearly a far superior mobile phone compared to those we were using 8 years go. In 1999, the common phone included calling, texting, primitive games and simple ringtones. The new Apple iPhone includes calling, video, video calling, mp3 (in fact not only an mp3 player its an iPod which is also one of the best and most common mp3 players on the market), media messaging, web surfing, touch screen, camera and probably more functions I am unaware of. This is definitely the best phone on the market to date however I have no doubt that phones will carry on developing for many years to come.

Fast Facts and Figures

Telephones

- One third of the world population has never made a telephone call.

That is still quite a lot of people yet to make a telephone call, although I don't think it will be long until that ratio is much smaller.

- While Sub-Saharan Africa contains about 10% of the world's population, it accounts for only 0.2% of the world's 1 billion telephone lines.
- The cost of renting a telephone connection on the African continent averages about 20 percent of GDP per capita compared to a world average of 9 percent and an average of only 1 percent in high-income countries.
- There are fewer than 5 telephones per 100 people in India.
- In the world, there are over 1.2 billion fixed telephone lines, 1.3 billion cellular subscribers and 140 billion international telephone traffic minutes each year.

Mobile Telephones

- As of 2002, mobile subscribers worldwide have outnumbered fixed-line subscribers. The mobile cross-over has taken place across geographic criteria, across socio-demographic criteria such as gender, income, or age, and across economic criteria.

I find it quite interesting to see that the amount of mobile phones is greater than the amount if land line subscribers due to the fact I would imagine a mobile phone being much more of an expense to run and much fewer people being able to afford one. But at what price do you put expense over practicality? I know a lot of people that would even feel as though they couldn't carry on their every day life without their mobile in their pocket.

Without mobile phones, the world would be a different place and being only 20 I find it hard to remember what life was like without them. This again proves just how much the mobile phone revolution is taking place and it wont be long before everyone you know possesses a mobile phone.

- Brazil has the same number of cellular phone subscribers as the whole of Africa combined. Asia, with 450 million subscribers, has twice the number of subscribers as the Americas combined. There are 836.5 million mobile subscribers in OECD countries.
- While the United States has 199 million cell phone subscribers, it is not part of the top ten countries with the highest percentage of mobile subscribers. 55% of the US population are mobile subscribers.

I was quite surprised by this, as I would have assumed the US to at least be in the top 10 countries as I feel that they are definitely within the top 10 when it comes to technology. However the size of America is quite large and open so maybe its size is relevant to the statistic results, although this would be voided by the result of Asia having over double the amount of mobile phones than the US.

- Africa holds only 3% of the world's mobile subscribers, yet Africa is the first place where mobile subscribers outnumbered fixed-line subscribers. In five years (1997-2002), the number of cell phone subscribers in Africa grew by 1600%.

Looking at this statistic it is quite clear how the use of mobile phones, even in poorer countries has rapidly increased in only 5 years. Thinking about this statistic, I feel further development of newer mobile phone technology will result in poorer countries being able to get hold of older models and increasing statistic even more.

- Nicaragua has more than 3 times more mobile phone subscribers than fixed land lines (739 thousand compared with 214 thousand).
- The number of mobile subscriptions per 100 people in a given country range from 120 in Luxembourg, to .44 in Malaysia, 24 in Jordan, 13 in Palestine, 3 in Nigeria et 0.7 in Tajikistan.

http://www.learningpartnership.org/resources/facts/technology

Safety Issues Connected to Mobile Phone Usage

The points below were taken from the BBC website.

Key Points

2004: there are more than 40 million mobile phones in the UK and over 30,000 base stations

Conflicting reports about the health risks of mobile phones appeared in the late 1990s

Given the immense numbers of mobile users, even small adverse effects on health could have major public health implications

In 2000, the Stewart Report found no known health problems caused by mobile phones, but advised caution especially among the young, until more research was carried out. A further report in 2004 backed this up

£7.4 million has now been invested in scientific research to investigate the effects of mobile phones

Even in 2004, which is now 3 years ago, 40 million out of 60 million (today the UK population is approximately 60,609,153) people owned a mobile which is over half the population. The 60 million population also includes the older generations and younger generations that will not be using mobile phones, so to me this tells me that most people you will know owns and regularly uses mobile telecommunication.

Are mobile phones dangerous?

Yes	No
Radio waves given off by mobiles can heat up body tissue, having damaging effects	Radio waves are not powerful enough to cause heat damage to the body
Magnetic fields created by mobile phones can affect the way that your body cells work	The magnetic fields are incredibly small, and so unlikely to affect cells in our body
People who make long mobile phone calls sometimes complain of fatigue, headaches, and loss of concentration	The same results have never been reported in laboratory conditions and may be due to other factors in modern lifestyles
Mobile phone users are 2.5 times more likely to develop cancer in areas of the brain adjacent to their phone ears	Researchers admit it's unclear this increase is linked to using mobiles
The International Agency for Research on Cancer found a link between childhood cancer and power lines. Like mobile phones, power lines also emit radiation	The radiation produced by powerlines is a different kind of radiation, with much more energy than that coming from mobile phones
Radio frequency waves similar to those in mobile phones altered the gene expression in nematode worms	Worms are not humans, there is no guarantee that our brain cells will behave in the same way

After reading the information above I feel much more wary about using mobile phones to make conversation. I have to admit I have used my mobile phone regularly for as long as I can remember and making long phone calls also quite often and I feel as though it is the norm. This makes me think twice about heavily using my mobile phone for conversation, as a lot of the information about the effects on the human body is still unknown. This is because it is only recently the mobile phone revolution begun and it is only recently that using a mobile phone daily is a normal part of most people's lives.

It scares me to think that me, and the generations below me will be the first to discover what affect this radiation really does have on our body. And when the facts

have become clear, if the outcome is bad, millions of people have no chance to turn back as mobile phone usage is still rapidly increasing daily, as younger and older people are beginning to purchase and use mobile technology.

I also think the majority of people that use mobile phones are unaware that there's a chance it could be bad for our bodies. I hope that the radiation affects on the human body are only minor if anything, for the sake for millions of people's health in the future. It could not be long before we discover that maybe mobiles phones are the biggest cause of cancer, who knows?

Suppliers and Leading Competitors

Leading competitors in mobile phone are generally separated in three different areas. The phone makers, the phone tariffs and the phone shops. The leading phone makers include Sony Ericsson, Nokia and Samsung. The phone tariffs include O2, Virgin, T-Mobile and Orange, and the leading phone shops include The Link and Phone4u. All of these businesses are gaining incredible amounts of money every day from the vast amount of mobile phone users, which funds the overwhelming amount of mobile phone advertising which is every where you look and literally every other advertisement on TV.

Mobile Phone History

A mobile telephone often called "mobile phone" or "cell phone" is a long-range, portable electronic device used for mobile communication.

The introduction of hexagonal cells for mobile phone base stations invented in 1947 by Bell Labs engineers and was further developed by Bell Labs during the 1960s.

Martin Cooper, a worker of Motorola is considered to be the inventor of the first practical mobile telephone for handheld use and one that has to be stationed within a vehicle. Martin Cooper made the first call on a handheld mobile phone on April 3, 1973, using a modem, which would in today's standard be considered a very heavy mobile phone. At the time he made his call, he was working as Motorola's General Manager of its Communications Department.

In the early to mid-1980s fully automatic cellular networks were first introduced known as the 1G generation. The 0G generation was not officially categorised as a mobile phone but was the first steps toward mobile technology, which was founded in 1945. In 1981 the Nordic Mobile Telephone (NMT) system was introduced as the first fully automatic mobile phone system. Up until the late

1980s the majority of mobile phones were too large to be carried like we do today, so they were often permanently installed in vehicles, which were used as car phones. With the advances of smaller digital components, mobile phones are getting much smaller and far lighter to carry.

Potential For Further Development and Likely Development

The advances in mobile phones and the continuous increase in mobile phone users and purchases, to me, is dependant on the advances in other types of media. For example if video developers and photography developers do not progress as fast as mobile phones are released, as well as many other developers, mobiles phones will come to a halt technology wise. I do think there are many chances left to develop mobile phones in the future, but I do think it will get to a stage where there is not much more you can do with a handheld device used for contacting people.

The biggest and most perfected development so far has been mobile phone picture taking. It wasn't long ago when picture taking on phones was more of a novelty activity and the quality of picture was not good enough to be used as anything but a small captured image on your phone. But these days phones are beginning to come with cameras capable of taking images of close the quality to a lot of modern digital cameras. This now enables and encourages us to upload these pictures to our computers to share to other people, and the use of digital photography has changed all of us with the use of Internet, which allows us to share pictures and images, which we would never have been able to do in the past. Obviously the quality of cameras on phones can definitely still improve as the quality of digital cameras is constantly improving in general.

Which now leads me onto the next development in mobile phone technology, which I think can definitely be improved. Unlike the photo taking, video recording on mobile phones is still a bit novelty. I am yet to witness a mobile phone recorded video of a high qualitystandard, however it is definitely improving and this will soon change. We have already undergone big differences in the way of the Internet and video. With the help of mobile phone video recording we have now been introduced to website such as Youtube and Break.com whereby users can upload their own videos, and lots of which are taken using mobile phones. Again I think video will continue to progress and develop for a long time to come.

I feel as though the development of picture and video functions on mobiles phones always seems to be at least one step down from the quality you would find if you were to buy a video recorder or camera individually. But one function I think is a lot more than one step down is the use of games on mobile phones. I have never played a game on a mobile phone which I truly enjoyed and didn't get bored of within a few minutes. This is mainly due to how primitive the games are, the lack of user friendliness and the neglect of decent graphics. If mobile phone developers are going to put so much effort into the progression of picture and video, then they should at least try and advance mobile gaming. I think this could dramatically increase sales and definitely attract an even younger audience.

After these advances there are still other things to be introduced and improved such as the introduction of touch screen. Its only recently a few of the phone makes introduced touch sensitive buttons for only two buttons, the on and off button and the call and end call buttons. It is only very recently Apple have introduced a phone that is fully dependent on touch screen to navigate throughout the GUI. As well as touch screen other things are still to get developed like surfing the web, size and shape of phones and video calling.

Summary

After researching and thinking about the mobile phone revolution and the development in mobile phone technology I feel much more aware of how quickly technology is advancing. I feel in a way it's definitely a good thing but also quite a scary idea that at the rate we are advancing we have no idea what could be just round the corner. What new technology will we all be purchasing in 50 years, which is a 'normal' part of everyone's lives. Recently, I watched a television programme on channel four called 'The Human Footprint' one of the facts included on this programme was, 'the average person will be introduced to another 1000 "couldn't live without" items in our lifetime' which implies there are yet to be many things to be invented which we will feel as though 'we couldn't live without' once we being to take these inventions for granted.

I think mobile phones will remain part of our every day lives forever and will one day be a piece of technology no one is without, unless health issues were to arise.

800/4000 words include information or quotes from other websites; these have been made clear in grey text.