

# ***The Psychological Impact of Modern Communication Technologies on Users***

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## **Abstract**

Both the **communicative behaviour** in general and the **use of communication technologies** of eight subjects are explored in detail with **problem-centered interviews**.

Out of the interview summaries, a **General Criterion for Media Separation** is extracted, which allows the separation of media into two groups:

1. On one side the **verbal-vocal, realtime-interactive, and non-time-buffered** media like *Telephone, Intercom, and face-to-face communication*
2. On the other side the **text-based, asynchronous, and time-buffering** media like *Letter, Telefax, and E-mail* (electronic mail)

The two media *Telephone Answering Machine* and *Online Chatting* (realtime communication via computer monitor and keyboard) occupy exceptional positions because they cannot be assigned to one or another pole of this dimension. These media are scrutinized closely: Through analyzing these "ricochets" under the aspects of both LANG's semiotic ecological approach and the model of privacy regulation presented by ALTMAN, important characteristics and phenomena of their use can be explained.

The ***Telephone Answering Machine*** is special because even though asynchronous and time-buffering, it is on a verbal-vocal basis! From the point of view of the semiotic ecological approach, it distinguishes itself by the fact that the external structures of a communicative process are indeed on a verbal-vocal basis, but they are not transitory, as is the case with all other media on verbal-vocal basis!

The communication mode ***Online Chatting*** is special because even though realtime-interactive and non-time-buffered, it is text-based! From the point of view of the semiotic ecological approach, Online Chatting is a communication technological exception because its externalizations—representing an intermediate stage of the communication process—are transitory, unlike most of the externalizations of other text-based media!

The study concludes with a detailed **outlook on a few prospective communication technologies and organizational modes of the future**.

Several developments and trends are pointed out, which could have striking effects on human communication behaviour, e.g., a universal, wireless telephone network with extremely miniaturized terminal devices, or the possibilities of virtual realities concerning human communication.

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\* For data and personality privacy reasons the summaries of interviews (appendices 19 to 26) are not enclosed with the public version of this study!