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ENGL 100

1 October 2022

Google's effect on the mind

Over the years Google has provided the world with searchable access to information.

Google seems to be a positive thing, but there are some negative consequences of Google. The question is, is Google's convenient access to information making the world stupider? The way that people overuse the internet is causing them to get more distracted. It causes a shorter attention span and makes their memory impaired.

The internet over time has subconscious effects on the attention span of everyone.

Compared to the past, the attention span is shortening. According to wyzowl.com “In 2000, it was 12 seconds. Now, 15 years later, it’s shrunk to 8.25 seconds”. Google has made searching for information so convenient that people don't have any patience to read. This is because the internet hooks people to their websites. As a result, we need shorter and shorter content and more summarizing to get more users. They do this all to try to get more users on their platform and to show them ads to make money. Deteriorating attention span is a consequence of information overload and fast-paced websites. Attention span is not the only thing affected. Our focus on the real world hurts, especially with huge amounts of screen time, which “leads to a loss of cognitive control—not a loss of attention, but a loss of our ability to control our mind” (www.opencolleges.edu.au). This mindless lack of focus is associated with many entertainment activities such as watching Netflix, YouTube, and TikTok. These platforms are often very harmful, as they don't teach anything. They are very easy to occupy your attention for hours on end.

Google has also changed the way we gather and learn about various things. In the past, before the age of the internet, information would be difficult to get. Because of the availability of the internet, information is so easy to access that “our internet usage has Googlified our brains, making us more dependent on knowing where to access facts and less able to remember the facts themselves,” (Erman Misirlisoy). For example, many people don’t even know where all the countries of the world are. People rely on Google too much. Since memorizing certain concepts is difficult, it would be a lot easier to google it every time. This is problematic because relying on Google too much doesn’t improve the brain, and thus reduces the brain’s ability to memorize. People tend to remember a lot more when examining a book rather than a PDF on a computer. One study tested that, “on average, participants using the non-digital platform scored higher on inference questions with 66 percent correct, as compared to those using the digital platform, who had 48 percent correct” (OpenCollege.edu). The numbers indicate that people who read on paper are 1.4 times more likely to retain information than those who do so on a computer. One reason is that reading on the computer feels awkward and strange, making them worry about the screen instead of understanding the PDF. This statistic might change in the future as computers are new and will take time for everyone to get used to.

In society today, everyone owns and uses a phone and a computer. These devices are very popular with everyone. Because they are very popular, they play for hours on end. Yet, people spend too much time on these devices, at least three hours a day. Wasted time, whether for entertainment, work, or social media, is not healthy for the mind. In fact “heavy digital media use leads to a loss of cognitive control—not a loss of attention, but a loss of our ability to control our minds” (OpenColleges.edu). Other than work, most of the things we do with our devices are completely mindless. Video games and scrolling through social media require very short-term

thought. The reason why these things are addictive is that it tends to make people forget their problems. It is an escape from reality. Having been unable to think of anything for hours, they become dumber upon returning from their devices. Long exposure to screen time also affects the mind on an emotional level. Long mindless exposure to the internet is only okay in moderation. More than five hours a day is not healthy. Having this much screen time sacrifices many real-life social events like talking to family and having friends. With huge amounts of screen time, “Hundreds of clinical studies show that screens increase depression, anxiety and aggression” (OpenColleges.edu). The devices also prevent people from being productive. Productivity is very critical for mental health. It gives people a sense of worth and accomplishment. Without some productivity, people can feel depressed because they might feel worthless. The internet also normalizes aggression and feeds violence to everyone.

Google, in the end, has many positive and negative effects on humanity. Google has affected the attention span and focus because of the fast pacing of the internet. Google has affected memory in a very negative way. People would rather know where to search instead of memorizing the information. Reading on a computer is less efficient than reading on paper. Too much screen time has caused people to be more mindless and have more anxiety, depression, and aggression. Google and the internet are indispensable, so it's imperative to guard ourselves against Google's negative effects.

Works Cited

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