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Audio Clip Script

Today, information is at our fingertips. We can share information and ideas with a simple click through social media platforms. However, the rapid availability of information and instant exchanges through social media may also be shortening human attention spans.

A recent study by Microsoft found that humans are now averaging about 8 seconds of uninterrupted focus whereas gold fish are believed to be capable of at least 9 seconds of concentration. However, gold fish don’t have things like Facebook, Instagram, or twitter providing instantaneous and condensed information at lightning speed.

**AUDIO CLIP 1:13-1:55 of 12 news** “people are taking in about 6 newspapers worth of data per day, overloaded… what happens when you get a notification…dopamine. Instantaneous gratification… NBA”

We are constantly interrupted by texts, tweets, notifications, ads, and emails causing our brains to get hooked on that stimuli out of curiosity. The release of dopamine and instant gratification encourages people to crave more and more information and it can be difficult to pay attention to any one thing for very long.

Perhaps, as we are bombarded with more and more media, we are simply adapting.

Instead of decreasing our attention span, maybe our easy access to information through social media is changing the way we focus our attention?

**AUDIO CLIP 2:14-2:51** [**https://www.psytoolkit.org/attention-span/**](https://www.psytoolkit.org/attention-span/)

These conflicting ideas suggest that debates about decreases in human attention spans aren't as black and white as we might assume.

It is apparent that human attention span has decreased but this could be a positive consequence that allows us to concentrate on what we consider to be worthwhile information.

And we might not want to so quickly accuse social media of ruining our ability to focus. Although our attention spans for consumptive behaviors have decreased, we still maintain an ability to spend significant amounts of time creating content to be shared through social media.

Creating social media content like memes and GIFS can take upwards of several hours to successfully complete. The creative thought that goes into social media postings should allow for the viewer to successfully receive the information, interpret it, and form an opinion on the post in under 10 seconds.

I recently made a couple of memes to post on Instagram. I had to learn the tools in Photoshop to manipulate the different aspects of my pictures. Then I had to come up with a creative and catchy caption to add to my post so that people understood the purpose of my meme. This process required my undivided attention. I quickly gained inspiration from previous social media postings to help me through this focused process of making my own content.

Learning that humans have lost 4 seconds of their attention spans can be alarming and prompt us to worry that that social media or screen time can have negative effects on humans. However, I think it is important to also look at the positive aspects of our technological innovations. Without social media outlets people wouldn’t have the space to create and get inspiration for their own multimedia compositions. No doubt, quickly clicking on links and images be distracting. Still we may be learning new methods of filtering and focusing. And until

researchers shift their efforts to the benefits of producing social media content and how they prompt people to engage in a creative, unique, and challenging multimedia compositions, it's too early to say that social media is ruining our ability to pay attention.

Sources:

https://www.12news.com/article/opinion/talker/is-social-media-to-blame-for-shortened-attention-spans/397077383