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Pocket revolution: Smartphone convergence in the 21st century

Ever heard the words Walkman, Gameboy, Discman, Watchman, Camcorder? If the answer is no, you are probably 24 and born in the era of laptops and smartphones. In which case, gather around kids, for I am about to spin a yarn on how it feels for fossils like me to live in a world where everything is at your fingertips and have everything you need in one handy convenient place.

Even for someone like me who has seen the birth, evolution, and eventual domination of smartphones, and therefore lived a life before it all, it still takes a monumental effort to imagine life even functioning without smartphones.

The quick Google search for a word you just heard, looking up someone's address and finding exact directions in Maps, snapping a photo of a bird sitting on a branch in front of a beautiful sunset, texting a friend 8,000 km away as if they are right next door — things like these still make me feel like I am living in the sci-fi cartoons I grew up watching.

While all of the above still makes me giddy with wonderment, those abilities alone are not enough to make it the global phenomenon that it is. You see, smartphones have not just replaced a handful of gadgets. No, the story goes much deeper than that.

Back in 2010, if you bought a smartphone, you were either a serial gadget

freak or a massive show-off (sometimes a bit of both). That's because smartphones in the early days still had not attained half of the functionalities it has today, and so, people in 2010 were not ready to embrace them.

The cost of entry did not help matters either. What changed was how smartphones tactfully started to include things that enrich our lives. And that's what we will be looking at today — all the things that the smartphone revolutionised. The emergence, and later convergence, of smartphones is as great an innovation to modern society as the wheel was for ancient society,



you see a sign on the road you do not know about? Take out your phone, start Google Translate, and done.

Yes, understanding a different language is that easy now, and it's poised to get even easier. The rise of AI (Artificial Intelligence) will help to bring down language barriers even more. There are already live-translation machines that can translate what a person is saying in your native language, in real-time, as the conversation happens, and soon, these features will appear in your regular phone calls.

MULTIMEDIA

Remember the Walkmans and Gameboys and whatnot I alluded to at the start? Smartphones put an end to every one of those gadgets. And here's how.

When people these days say they are bored, I wonder how that is possible when they have access to nearly every movie, TV show, music, book, and entertaining video ever made at their fingertips. That's right, smartphones have basically become our one-stop entertainment shops. After all, it's a big (relatively speaking) screen with speakers and the internet.

To cash in on this device, and the reach it has, streaming services have cropped up, offering movies, TV shows, and music to its users for a monthly fee. These services have also put systems in place that learn from your watching/listening behaviour and serve you content that suits your tastes, meaning you are always discovering new things to consume.

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The first breakthrough for communications was back when cellular phones hit the scene but still, things had remained mostly the same, apart from the introduction of texting via SMS, even during the early days of the smartphone.



and for once, it is not hyperbole.

COMMUNICATION
Most of you reading this probably do not know about the anxiety of 'calling abroad.' Back in the day, you could only do that via landline telephones, and the cost was astronomical enough to put off any unnecessary calls.

In the early noughties, there was MSN Messenger, so you could text someone, and Skype for video calls, but with how the internet was back then, even those were luxuries, because both

required a computer.

The first breakthrough for communications was back when cellular phones hit the scene but still, things had remained mostly the same, apart from the introduction of texting via SMS, even during the early days of the smartphone.

With the rise of instant messaging services for smartphones, and eventually, video calling, and internet-based calling such as WhatsApp, Messenger, etc., communicating evolved into a whole new realm. Suddenly, talking to someone on the other side of the planet became as trivial as getting yourself a bottle of water from the fridge!

Even the concept of communication itself has undergone a massive change. From vocabulary-rich sentences to shortening words to save time and space (lyk, lyf, lol anyone?), to replacing words altogether for emojis and now, we can convey complex emotional states and phases through memes.

I am weird, you say? If you happen to have a time machine somewhere, drop by 2007 and mention 'meme' to someone, and see the faces they make. That, in itself, will be meme-worthy.

Smartphones can even break down difficult hurdles like language. Travelling somewhere with a different language and



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