

A Civilisation of Convenience

Convenience, reliance on our digital counterparts and future implications

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I think a lot about two dominating features of our lives. The first is efficiency; almost every advancement and innovation, whether a tech development or a lifestyle adjustment, is a step towards a more efficient environment.

The second, and the subject of this article, is technology's alliance with convenience.

Perhaps it's a demonstration of our technological capability; a sort of 'we can, so we will' mentality. Every dimension of daily life; travel, communication, work and even our diet is predominantly concerned with convenience.

This is not a solemn '*inevitable doom of Humanity*'-type article. Neither am I going to abruptly suggest the robot take-over so commonly fantasized in sci-fi motion pictures.

Obviously both principles are governed by logic. People want more free time, and people want easy. These are both expected and understandable. Unfortunately, there are a growing number of difficult-to-predict and -treat consequences of these forward-thinking narratives.

An Easy Existence

Technological developments have been engineered towards making our lives easier. We experience the *'means-to-ends'* in diminishing numbers.

Electronic tickets reduce queueing, online shopping means better deals and less time waiting on deliveries, extensive public transport means less time spent traveling to and from destinations.



Huffington Post UK

We can work more remotely, and in our own time and by our own terms, nodding a hat towards the flexibility offered through technology, a plethora of jobs created through innovations, and instant communications.

These are all phenomenal products of digital developments.

We encounter the world in a fundamentally different way than people would have done five, ten, twenty years ago. Exponential

growth means ease accompanied with uncertainty for where future developments will place us.

Inventions fuelling convenience are an indicator for how far our civilisation has come, and where we are headed. *Netflix*, *microwave meals* and *UBER* are shaped by, and simultaneously shape our lives.

They satisfy demand, similarly, propose the supply to instigate demand. People largely don't know what they want until it is offered to them.

Without the unanimous desire for more free time, these services would not exist, yet because they do, we idealise more.

With capitalism's perpetual growth and progression, our daily lives too are in a state of perpetual change.

Stunted Developments

As our cultures have indicated, we will choose convenience over pretty much anything.



Easy is better, right?

It has been indicated that more screen-time, and less face-to-face interactions are leading us towards a discomfort with the latter.

This argument holds weight; we are a highly adaptable species, and we are largely shaped by our environment in the early stages of development. If we rarely interact with others in real life, picking up on body language, forms of rhetoric and facial expressions, we will be inhibited in our abilities to do so.

There have been claims that Alexa is drastically changing the way children are taught to interact with others. Alexa responds agreeably to commands, without the courtesies of P's and Q's. Children then, understandably, emulate this behaviour when interacting with others, leaning towards submissive demands and shying from polite requests.

I strongly believe that the unquestioned structures of interactions and suggestive details we encounter are the processes that need most scepticism, as they have highest margins for causing larger issues.

By not addressing Alexa's female voice and taking it for granted as 'how things are', we are subliminally accepting ideas of female subservience.

Forced Smiles and Zero-Interaction Restaurants

Another example of technology's detrimental impact is amongst the UBER driver communities. The rating system, by which drivers are reviewed on a star scale regarding their behaviour, is technology's answer to undesirable interactions.

UBER drivers are disciplined and coerced into politeness, with the fear of a bad rating affecting the possibility of future work. The rating system has the potential to exceed adequate levels of friendly interactions with the fear of losing work consequently.



[UBER.com](https://www.uber.com)

People are taught to be nice to receive rewards and avoid repercussions, rather than out of integrity.

Perhaps an impact of our lessened desire to have face-to-face interaction, is in the culinary industries. Despite an evening out being a traditionally social endeavours, restaurants now cater for introverted and reclusive demographics.

This could be a great move forward for introverted people, making a previously stressful experience, a peaceful and enjoyable one.

Ichiran Ramen, a Japanese Ramen chain restaurant, first began the idea of zero-interaction dining in the 90's. The concept was first implemented to adhere to young female students, who felt

uncomfortable eating in public yet has now gained much popularity. This is suggestive of the *'shape, shaped by'* thesis explained earlier.

Strides towards reclusion and a digitalised existence have never been so integrated into societies, with technology's helping hand catalysing the transition.

Another advancement in restaurants is the robot waiter, incorporated to minimise costs of paying human waiters. China has implemented the innovations for over a decade, and American cities have seen a heightened number of robot waiters (and waitresses?) in restaurants as rising wages impact the maximisation of profits.



Hexapolis.com

A conclusion to provoke further thought

These developments raise issues regarding the problematics of profit maximisation, convenience-orientated structures and the

unpredictable social implications of digital interactions, which the future will most certainly have to address.

To reach some sort of conclusion, technological developments have brought changes to every facet of our society, and our existence.

How and where we travel, how we communicate and with whom, and the volume by which we consume information and products will continue to undergo unprecedented levels of expansion.

This is an incredible achievement, yet a cautionary tale to tell, is to remain critical of changes. Easier is not always better, and digitalised interactions are seemingly on course to replace human ones, with unknown costs for future generations.