

## ELDERLY POPULATION AND THE INTERNET

A POPULAÇÃO IDOSA E A INTERNET

POBLACIÓN MAYOR E INTERNET


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### RESUMO:

Analyze the use of internet by the elderly population in Brazil. The methodology used will be through a qualitative study, through a bibliographic survey, verifying the bibliographic studies on the use of the internet at national level. The use of the internet is the most immediate when comparing it with other technologies, such as electricity, the car or even television, however, a group of people still proves little proximity to these technologies: The elderly. As an effect, we will demonstrate that there is an increase in the number of Internet use by this portion of the population, the elderly and with an increase forecast.

**KEYWORDS:** Access in Brazil; Seniors; Internet.

## Introduction

The internet is a kind of relatively current technology. Its expansion took place in the mid-90s, when it was developed, assuming significant magnitudes in a brief time span. However, the group of elderly people did not keep up with the referred growth regarding the use of the internet. This stems from the fact that such a group of people face some difficulties around their own age group, since when a person ages, he goes through changes in his ability to learn and understand, as well as suffering memory reduction, sensory variations, decreased visual capacity, reduced motor coordination among other physical changes that can alter the possibility of interaction between the elderly person, the computer and the internet (Schwamabach & Silva, 2007).

In order to reduce these difficulties, the Brazilian government has defined accessibility standards to be adopted in the virtual environment of the internet to encourage the use of this tool and welcome this growing social group. Studying the

elderly population and practicing quite beneficial for a society, whereas once a country develops, consequently its population ages in a greater proportion.

Lechakoski commenting on Cássia and Oliveira (2006, p. 568) states that “Brazil has not yet satisfactorily equated the condition of the elderly and their needs reflected by the low priority for the elderly”, however, this social group motivates specific demands that they need to be known in order to be served.

The objective of this study is to evaluate the growing use of the internet by the elderly Brazilian population, the group that is 60 (sixty) years old or more, taking into account secondary data from research carried out by entities, observing the conduct of current data and the benefits arising from the use of the internet by the elderly population.

In this sense, we have to carry out studies in relation to the elderly population become essential, since they satisfy a significant part of the population (Brito, 2012). The increase in the aging of the Brazilian population was due to the increase in life expectancy, the shrinking fertility rates, the evolution of medicine, and the search, albeit reduced, for providing better living conditions for the population (Oliveira, 1999).

Based on the data provided by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), Brazil currently has a population of about 15 million elderly people, representing a percentage of 9% (nine percent) of the population, and still expecting this number increase to 34 million by 2025, which should be equivalent to 15% (fifteen percent) of the population, becoming the sixth country with the oldest population in the world.

This change gives rise to different views about old age and the aging process (Oliveira, 2006). With the prospect of an increase in the elderly age group in Brazil for the coming years, it is necessary to be concerned with the quality of life of this social group, in terms of accessibility, since it is possible to identify in this group, in the years that follow, a significant market to be served, especially through the internet.

According to Lechakoski (in NIE, 2001) major events, such as in the case of the internet that have an impact on a worldwide proportion in society, must be scrutinized to make an analysis of their effects on the lives of citizens. And when it comes to new technology, the impact of their insertion tends to be much greater in social groups that have not had contact or have not followed their evolution, as with the elderly (Miranda & Farias, 2009).

With this new technological reality, there are several innovations and services that the elderly can use in a more comfortable, economical way and without having to travel, such as consulting the government website, carrying out bank transactions, making virtual purchases, meeting people and places and consume information (Brito, 2012). In this context, investing in the insertion of the elderly in this digital technological world is to collaborate to increase their quality of life, therefore, this study aims to give visibility to the use of the internet by the elderly, demonstrates some difficulties that this interaction can present, its risks and the benefits it can offer.

### **I the use of the internet by the elderly**

Demographic changes related to reducing the birth rate and increasing the median outlook on life are seen as a global event. They occur as a result of scientific, technical and social developments (Ulbricht & Cassol, 2005). Among such developments, the internet stands out (Miranda & Farias, 2009).

#### **Definition of Elderly**

According to the World Health Organization definition, the third age starts from the age of 65 (sixty-five) years. In this way, people are defined as elderly, when reaching the chronological age described above. Aging is a physiological condition that causes physical deterioration that has occurred in individuals over time.

Although it is a natural condition imposed on all living beings, specific behaviors are verified in humans (Nunes, 1999). In the same context, for Master Beauvoir (1990), the phenomenon of aging is considered a biological condition, which triggers psychological implications. In these terms, both effects, physiological and psychological, need to be taken into account and analyzed mutually.

In the words of Nunes (1999), it is necessary to take into account lifestyle, food, housing, among other aspects that can contribute to the aging process, which enhance the anatomical phenomena expected from this condition.

Among the main physical problems that can affect the elderly we can highlight: bone deterioration, hearing loss, loss of visibility, cardiac symptoms, reduction of immediate memory and fixation. Among others, the problems arising from the aging process are revealed through symptoms such as decreased sensory capacities, such as loss of visual capacity that makes it difficult to read on smaller-inch monitors or on higher resolution displays that make normally small images (Cybis & Sales, 2003).

## Internet history

With the appearance of the internet, in the 90s, specifically in 1995 (VIEIRA, 2003), the small portion of the population that was used to computing was able to quickly approach this new form of technology, which in a short space time has gained dimensions worldwide, being operated by millions of people worldwide.

In this context, while electricity took about 46 (forty-six) years to reach fifty million users, motor vehicles took 55 (fifty-five) years, telephony 35 (thirty-five) years and television took 26 (twenty six) years, the internet reached that level in a short time, with only 4 years of existence (Miranda & Farias, 2009).

With the advent of the internet, a term was again used to define the generation that make use of this technology, the "Information Society" which, in the words of Lyon (1988), is about the growing dependence on the means of production for information technology, which changes social contexts, from economics to culture, affecting the field of politics. The main point of this denomination is information, pushed by the great power of information processing, its storage and its fast transmission (Mortari, 2011).

## Seniors On The Internet

Taking into account that society is highly computerized, connected and globalized through the internet, and taking into account the aging of the population, it is possible to see a new demand and potential for using this tool (Mortari, 2011 ). Through the internet it is permissible to have easy access to information on issues such as physical activities and health, since it is an effective way to introduce and update its users (Schwamabach & Silva, 2007).

In this context, it is clear that there are specificities in the interaction of the elderly person with the internet, which do not happen with another group of individuals, due to their goals and experiences. In this way, this relationship tends to be distinct, since the elderly person has, in addition to the limitations resulting from age, other interests or a way of enjoying the internet, due to their physical, financial condition and current way of life or their life history (Tezza, 2010). This leads to the creation of a specified demand for internet providers.

### **Accessibility**

The term accessibility, based on Brazilian legislation, consists of the condition for use with due autonomy and total and assisted security of environments, furniture and urban equipment, buildings, transport services and devices, mechanisms and means of communication and information by individuals with disabilities or people with reduced mobility (Law No. 10,098, 2000).

In this contest, it is concluded that this concept allows access to the navigation device and the observation of the content. Therefore, the primary focus of accessibility is to eradicate or reduce the results of restrictions, however its importance extends to everyone, since the focus is the search for excellence and the effectiveness of the pages of the sites, enabling a better exchange with all users who seek information (Cybis, 1998).

### **Internet benefits for the elderly**

The use of the internet is capable of bringing benefits to the elderly, even making it possible to maintain the state of health, since in the same way that the body must be exercised to provide health, mental development can stimulate the quiet behavior that some old people adopt with increasing age, in this context, in the words of the master according to Kachar (2001), the moderately used technology can promote the communication process by encouraging interpersonal relationships, reducing isolation, instigating the mind and developing your well-being, enabling with that individuals can keep in touch with their relatives and friends in a virtual environment to share information.

According to Guyton, (1993). The natural aging process provides a decline in one of the mental functions, called cognition, or the knowledge process. Its attribution is developed through the acquisition of knowledge, intuition, attention, language, skill, perception of the other, skill, motor behavior, decision making, planning and judgment.

Another cognitive sense altered with the arrival of old age is memory. Man has two kinds of memory: the first and short-term memory, that is, the most socially widespread memory, immediate memory, and long-term memory. With these memories, a message sent from any of the senses to the brain is initially stored in immediate memory, which has a small storage capacity, and then can be stored in long-term memory, which has greater storage capacity, however it has recovery difficulty.

According to Fialho (2001), as human beings get older, the less information they retain in their immediate memory. Still in the words of the same author, interactive environments, when stimulated by cognitive development, facilitate the methodology of knowledge, through face-to-face learning techniques as well as through virtual learning.

Sensory skills, those used to identify stimuli and individualize them, can be improved with exercise by instigating changes in perception that are respectable in the learning process (Ulbricht & Cassol, 2005).

### **What do the elderly look for on the internet?**

Regarding internet users classified as elderly, a survey carried out with this social parcel carried out by the University of Brasília UNB, by the journalist, doctor in sociology Sousa (2009), who sought to investigate which interests most led the elderly to use the internet, revealed the following: search for social relationships through chat rooms; looking for new friendships; exchanges of information, recipes and other content; search for loving relationships; search for periods of relaxation; and search for affirmation and increased self-esteem. These were the factors most reported by elderly Internet users.

Digital mechanisms are seen as an extremely important means of interaction that allows the reduction of social exclusion and especially loneliness.

In this context, we have several mechanisms available today on the internet, for which it is possible to minimize people's loneliness and they do not feel alone and socially excluded. Vilela (2016) mentions some of them: connectivity with the digital medium expands the network of sociability and interaction of people of all ages with friends and family through chat rooms, friendship rooms; social interaction through exchanging e-mails, posting documents, texts, photos, testimonials on a personal blog, comments on a friend's blog; contacts via messenger (MSN), messages in virtual communities, instant messages; and finally share content, make purchases online, chat and ask questions with columnists and chat with professionals at the end of TV programs.

All of these willing mechanisms, and their effective use, in addition to providing interaction, intersubjectivity through the exchange of experiences, positive emotions, reciprocity, support the active mind, enabling the acquisition of new knowledge, the willingness to learn, improvement memory and language.

The use of the internet allows this social group the possibility of maintaining its discourse and identity, transforming it into an active being in the creation of content. They become consumers, critics and more easily approach other generations of individuals.

Thus, it is extremely important to provide the elderly with the use of this form of technology, keeping up to date and helping them to understand its infinite modifications and updates. This form of participation reinserts the elderly person in the social environment in a productive and creative way.

Likewise, this technology provides those who do not have face-to-face interaction, with another individual a normal relationship between two people, since a person using a computer device becomes passive, does not act in relation to the other, only receiving information.

The internet also works in order to guarantee the insertion of the elderly person in the modern social context, since it becomes a generator of bridges between human social groups, a source of attracting new friendships, a form of virtual social relationship between certain communities and study groups (Facebook, Wathassap, MSN, ICQ, Instagram).

### **The internet as a learning tool**

Nowadays, there is a trend regarding the use of advanced technologies by the elderly population. The Internet has been observed to be one of the main tools for global integration, due to the large amount of information that is available on the network. This information can appear in the form of an image and written text.

The Internet has become a form of access to information, in which tools provide the transmission of information printed on paper to electronic media, which can be archived and sent digitally, facilitating its use (Le Coadic, 1996, p 22-109).

Thus, due to the influence of the digital age on people's daily lives, it is advocated that it be made available to all age groups, without distinction; in this way, they must be present more and more in the life of the elderly community. This goal can be achieved through individual or institutional initiative, and in both cases, according to Mestre Valente (1999), teachers, instructors, students and professionals need to go together looking, learning and discovering.

In this context, the computer becomes a tool for complementing, improving this relationship, enabling users to practice the ability to search and choose information, solve problems, understand and filter the localized information.

The Internet has the power to integrate its users with citizens in their communities and in the global electronic community, guaranteeing them the possibility of exchanging information that can contribute to their learning. The electronic mechanisms make it possible to be used to guarantee the integration of the elderly in the learning procedure, based on motivation and preparation.

It is also believed that the Internet consists of a technology that may motivate the elderly community, through novelty and through the inexhaustible possibilities that are found in it.

In this context, Moran asserts that:

[...] the Internet helps to develop intuition, mental flexibility, adaptation to different rhythms. Intuition, because information is being discovered through success and error, through "hidden" connections. The connections are not linear, "linking" through hypertexts, texts, interconnected, but hidden, with countless different possibilities for navigation. [...] On the Internet we also develop new forms of communication, especially writing. (Moran, 1998, p.128)

With the spread of the internet, members of the Third Age will be able to exchange ideas and relate to other individuals who are plugged into the network, improving communication between groups. It has a wide range of alternatives, the chat, the chat rooms with age group, with being one of the Internet options that most motivate internet users to stay plugged in longer.

However, not all individuals have the resourcefulness and affinity to use this form of technology, there are many people who are afraid and resistant to using this type of technology.

## **Conclusion**

The popularization of the use of the internet has increased significantly during the short period of its existence to the present day, however, its use and interactivity still seems to have some accessibility difficulties for the elderly user in Brazil.

It is concluded that the internet over time has become a great source of social integration, that its use has been increasing sequentially among the elderly population, who find in this tool, a vast option of leisure, entertainment and health, since it makes it possible to decrease, to bring users closer together and to create a network of members integrated among themselves.



In this way, the daily practice of using the internet, in the words of Kachar (2001), is of the utmost need to provide the maintenance of intellectual and physical activities of the elderly person in constant use, in this way, there will be a contribution to their health and well being. -being, which can be used preventively in case of problems with memory or motor coordination.

Finally, it is concluded that due to the emergence of the internet, the elderly are acquiring greater opportunities in different areas of society, such as in the area of learning, leisure, in the search for information, in the importance as a human being, and especially I try to acquire greater social space (Gaspari & Schwartz, 2005).

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**RESUMO:**

Analisar o uso da internet pela população de idosos no Brasil. A metodologia utilizada será por meio de estudo qualitativo, através de um levantamento bibliográfico, verificando-se os estudos bibliográficos sobre o uso da internet a nível nacional. A utilização da internet é a mais imediata ao se comparar com outras tecnologias, tais quais a eletricidade, o automóvel ou ainda a televisão, todavia, ainda persiste um grupo de pessoas que comprovapouca adjacência com essas tecnologias: Os idosos. Como efeito, demonstraremos que há um crescimento no número de uso à internet por essa parcela da população, os idoso e com previsão de aumento.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVES:**Acesso no Brasil; Idosos; Internet

**RESUMEN:**

Analizar el uso de internet por la población anciana en Brasil. La metodología utilizada será a través de un estudio cualitativo, a través de una encuesta bibliográfica, verificando los estudios bibliográficos sobre el uso de internet a nivel nacional. El uso de internet es el más inmediato al compararlo con otras tecnologías, como la electricidad, el automóvil o incluso la televisión, sin embargo, un grupo de personas aún demuestra poca proximidad a estas tecnologías: los ancianos. Como efecto, demostraremos que hay un aumento en el número de uso de Internet por parte de esta parte de la población, los ancianos y con una previsión de aumento.

**PALABRAS-CLAVES:**Acceso en Brasil; Personas mayores; Internet.