

**Ayman Kole & Martin A. M. Gansinger (Eds.)**

**Roots Reloaded.**  
**Culture, Identity and Social Development in the Digital Age**



*Dedicated to Ahmed-Nouri and Atilla*

## ***Acknowledgements:***

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## *About the Editors*

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Dr. Martin Abdel Matin Gansinger (born 1979 in Austria) studied Communication Science and Political Science at the University of Vienna and passed both with distinction. His Master's thesis discusses recursive patterns of cultural, social, and political resistance in various forms of Black American musical expression and the potential of HipHop as an alternative communication-structure for the compensation of dysfunctional representation through mainstream-media and has been

published in 2008. He furthermore analyzed the conditions of communication and interaction in regard to the practice of collective improvisation as a musical method and its correspondence to the concept of the Ideal Speech Situation as introduced by Habermas – as well as its efficiency in the context of Intercultural Communication – to attain a Doctor's degree in Communication Science (published 2010).

Next to being an editor and journalist for *jazzzeit*-magazine and Vienna-based radio station orange 94.0 from 2005-2009 he has been working as a PR-coordinator for the internationally awarded, independent label JazzWerkstatt Records. Martin Abdel Matin Gansinger conducted several long-term field studies abroad and received financial funding through the University of Vienna's research scholarship. He spent a year in Ghana in coordination with the Vienna Institute for Development and Cooperation and Prof. John Collins from the University of Ghana/Accra, researching Intercultural Communication processes in the context of transfusional West African music styles - including an extended stay at the local compound of the Jamaica-based *Bobo Shanti-Mansion*, one of the strictest subdivisions of the *Rastafari*-movement, and allowance to their communal *Nyahbinghi*-ceremonies. Further field research aiming at extemporaneous communication techniques and its use in traditional knowledge- and recognition-systems has been done in Fez/Morocco and the convent of the Naqshbandi Sufi order in Lefke/Cyprus where he is working and residing since 2009. He is currently holding the position of an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Communication at Girne American University, teaching Undergraduate-, Master-, and Ph.D.-classes as well as appointed Head of Department of Radio, TV & Cinema.

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## ***Introduction***

No road traveled is free of obstacles. Yet, already, the 21<sup>st</sup> century is set to be dominated by the Digital Era. The path of e-learning is fast developing an infrastructure integral to training in a comprehensive manner, utilizing technological tools to instigate effective communication. The boundless avenues of wireless communication have led to an explosion in business and educational efficiency. Social media has transcended all known perimeters of yesterday to access and distribute instant information, thereby producing a society of eager networkers. Without a doubt, these online platforms will continue to expand. The digital revolution will construct more activities, refine existing applications, create more like-minded communities through social groups, voice the hopes and agonies of crisis-affected peoples, share regular news or alarming updates, challenge or promote political persuasions, and provide means to express various opinions from left to right and those in the middle.

Therefore, it is at such a period that we allow promising young academics – alongside experienced scholars – to contribute their opinions, findings and overall efforts to this dynamic new field that widens its sphere each day.

From the Aboriginal tribes of Australia, to the Maoris of New Zealand, and then the Sufi-teachings of mystical Islam, the significance of the oral and written traditions and their current relation to online activities will be explored in the opening article.

Our various extensions into the Digital Era will continue with a closer look at weight loss support groups and their widening sphere on Facebook, Facebook usage in language learning interactions, smartphone addiction and internet dependency issues as well as online perspectives of controversial ethical issues.

As mentioned earlier, the Digital progress has already left its dominating mark as the world entered the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Without a doubt, as technology continues its ascent, society will be faced with new and altering values in an effort to catch-up with this extraordinary Digitization, adapt satisfactorily in order to utilize these strong developments in everyday life.

Dr. Ayman Kole & Dr. Martin A. M. Gansinger



*Tatiana Pentes*

**blackBOX V3: Painting A Digital Picture of Documented  
Memory**

<http://www.strangecities.net/blackboxv3.html>

**Abstract:** BLACK BOX V3: Painting A Digital Picture of Documented Memory is a digital art film where the protagonist Nina's discovery of symbolic objects, ethnic dance, & musical forms (Hindustani, Rembetika, Chinese Jazz) reveal her cultural/ spiritual origins. The digital film is a documentary archiving an interactive version for download & play.

LAUNCH: [http://bit.ly/BLACKBOX\\_V3](http://bit.ly/BLACKBOX_V3) (Shockwave Player)

**Keywords:** Interactive Media, Digital Art, Identity, Cultural Memory

## ***Pandora's Box***

*It is inscribed, as on Pandora's Box...do not open...passions...escape in all directions from a box that lies open... (Latour, 1987, p. 7)*

This article is an examination and critical positioning of my current digital media project *blackBOX – Painting a Digital Picture of Documented Memory*. *blackBOX* is an interactive CD-ROM 'game' and also an internet work. *blackBOX* seeks to exploit and enhance the creative potentials of digitally produced music, sound, image and text relationships in an interactive and online environment. This work seeks to reverse, obscure and distort the dominating/colonialist gaze in a playful manner. *blackBOX* is produced through the hybrid meeting of visual arts practice, digital film production and documentary dance performance. It also interacts with the notion of 'electronic' (image/sound/text) writing, that was in fact prefigured in early Russian *avant-garde* practices. In the words of El Lissitsky:

*The new book demands the new writer. Inkstand and goose quill are dead...  
The printed sheet transcends space and time. The printed sheet, the infinity  
of the book, must be transcended... (El Lissitsky, 1923)*

The protagonist of the *blackBOX* digital media work, Nina, undertakes a journey, a struggle and search for virtual objects. The idea of mobilising a series of myths cross-culturally is at play both in the inner workings of the game device and in the computer interface strategy. The visual screens are composed of the virtual surface fragments of the archival materials and objects. These spaces form an electronic stage where the narrative elements unfold as part cinema, part computer arcade game.

*blackBOX* has been devised for gallery installation. The digital story first emerges from the textile surface of heroine Nina's (a Russian/Greek girl) red velvet dress, adorned with roses, through a bed of oriental cushions, where she writhes in her chrysalis. Sanskrit, Greek and Russian text are projected across her body. Images of the girl move into representations of a modern urban metropolis. The player/participant is invited to explore this interactive metropolis, as filtered through the digital experiences and sensations of the



girl, and to discover three metaphorical ‘Chinese Boxes’, which contain three symbolic performances.

The key interface design metaphor at this stage is a Chinese ornamental window, and interaction with this interface frames the central narrative. Inside this framework the girl discovers performances from three ‘imagined’ Australian diasporic communities; Rembetika (the Greek blues); classical Indian dance and music (Odissi and Kuchipudi traditions); and fragments of Australian jazz performed by musicians with Russian origins.

### ***Interface design metaphor***

The interface design metaphor for *blackBOX* is an electronic stage/screen surface where performances appear as if conjured from the imagination, or a dream. The participant/player moves around the digital surface of the stage, exploring through opening boxes, musical and dramatic performances, interviews with the musicians and dancers, documentary fragments of performances, statements by artists, text documents, newsprint articles, archival radio fragments, televisual and other related material. The action/performances appear within the immersive environment of a series of Byzantine (Greek), Sanskrit (Indian) and 1930s’ Russian jazz in Chinese diaspora.

Chinese-inspired screen frames combine electronic text and images in various assemblages trigger embedded material, a visual/audio hypertext (Hockey, 2001). Traditional modes of storytelling and music are challenged in this interface design, as the player/participant is provoked to engage with the music and performances.

As the player interacts with the screen, they consider the ways in which (traditional) musical and dance forms mix in various ‘compositions’ to create a hybrid of different cultural forms. This ‘game’ also acts as a digital archive and documentation of the metamorphosis of traditional cultural and musical forms, through the creative potentials opened up for cultural producers in the digitally manipulated performance, sound, image and text environment of interactive media.

These ‘compositions’ provide perspectives on the emergence of a uniquely Australian contemporary sound/culture that is an amalgamation and integration of three diasporic genres of music achieved through the creation of ‘electronic writing’, the assembling of an ensemble of fragments into image/ sound/text ‘compositions’.

## *Through the looking glass*

The heroine, Nina, is the character with which the player identifies and observes through the unfolding of the digital media text. Screen events unfold through her eyes, revealing her projected/imaginary dreams and creating a narrative. The areas of interactive program content are mediated through Nina's voice (Lou-Lou Sy), the voice of an Indian woman (Devleena Ghosh), fragments of a Chinese woman singing (Zhou Xuan recorded in the 1930s) and fragments of a Greek musician talking/singing (John Conomos and Rebetiki Ensemble).

These voices are integrated with archival documents, voice-over material and sound atmospheres, which gives the stories a space for reflection. Visual and sonic devices form signatures marking out the areas of program content. These sonic devices denote both the present (time) and the recollection of previous events. Areas of program content map the music/dance archive: a set of pathways; chineseBOX, which plays a form of jazz music that migrated to Australia with Russian refugees from China; jewelBOX, the dance music culture that has more recently emerged from Indian communities in Australia, people who migrated from Indian diasporas in Fiji, Singapore and Malaysia as well as from the Indian sub-continent; pandora's BOX, Greek economic migrants/refugees, playing Rembetika, a politically engaged 'blues'; and two conclusions, an electronic poetic reverie and a visual/audio collage of the various music/dance genres that speak of mixed origins.

Once the player/participant has entered an interactive 'composition', the program content is divulged through a series of virtual artefacts. These artefacts become icons that trigger areas of the program content, and through the exploration of these configurations, ideas about the music/dance forms are revealed. Inside the jewelBOX story pathway, the narrative is revealed through interaction with the virtual dance jewels, which become icons representing the different levels of the narrative. Interaction with these dance jewels triggers performative spaces, revealing a number of classical Indian dances and artefacts, embedded into stylised electronic stages.

## ***Diasporic dance music***

*The aristocratic pleasure of counting differences is savored. I cut my hair, he plaits his... he uses chopsticks; I write with a goose quill, he draws characters with a paintbrush...*

Jean-Paul Sartre (Landow, 1999, p. 151)

As a creative producer of digital media, I'm working to interrogate an implicit ideological agenda of the *colonial constructions of racial, cultural, and geographic difference ... [examined] through the channels of photographic production and consumption* (Sartre, 2001, p. 2).

The parallel discourse weaving its thread through this creative work and writing is to make visible the construction of identity as a fragile relationship between observer and observed, the colonising/dominant gaze and the marginalised ethnicity (the subject envisioned as both 'racial inferior' and object of fascination)... (High & Sampson, 2002, p.1)

In taking up new media to represent my own subjective ethno-cultural identity, I am playfully disrupting the subject/object dichotomy, and articulating my own ethno-cultural hybridity. I am attempting to reveal the social contract (collusion) of racial stereotypes as a cultural, social and political fabrication (High & Sampson, 2002, p.1)

Inside this intertextual work, fascination with the 'spectacle' of the Other, where *the image of the colonial Other becomes a trope of desire for the Western viewer... Through repetitive, fetishistic dissemination of stereotypes* (High & Sampson, 2002, p. 2) is manipulated. Engagement with this artful game reveals the artifice of its own shiny surface, projected onto the cave wall, like Platonic electric shadows.

My research methodology is based on participant observation, working with (beside) and documenting (through film, video and sound) music/dance performances. The work I am making and the creative research in which I am engaged focus on imaging (imagining) and representing a number of different concepts through the production of a non-linear interactive multimedia work.

The 'box' is a symbolic reference to software aesthetics and what can be revealed/unfolded in the interactive environment. Additionally, the box is understood as that which marks us

out from ‘others’ as part of a distinct group or scientific catalogue. The concept of the ‘song’ is engaged with as a mode of cultural discourse/cultural expression, political persuasion and propaganda, particularly in relation to ethnic minorities. ‘Dance forms’ are understood as a symbolic strategy for moving in-between theories and cultural practices.

The digital ‘journey’ is used as a metaphor for discovery of this new media and the different cultural forms. Image/sound/text assemblages, juxtapositions and arrangements are used as analogous to musical/painterly and choreographic compositions. A self-reflexive program articulating the ‘open’, ‘ambivalent’ and ‘fragmentary’ formal qualities of the non-sequential narrative is revealed (High & Sampson, 2002, p. 3). Finally, the analogy between ‘migration’ as migration of people, music, memories, and the migration of the old media into the new media is explored (2002, p. 6).

## ***Historical research***

The objective of this creative research is to extend, complicate and sophisticate my earlier experiments with the music of Russian jazz in China, in my production of an interactive non-linear multimedia work entitled *Strange Cities*.

In my earlier work I focused on a vinyl recording, *Strange Cities (Stranyie Garadnye)*, recorded by my Russian grandfather Sergei Ermolaeff, which I stumbled upon after his death. This record was a body of both original compositions and folk ballads from pre-revolutionary Russia. Most songs, including the title track, were the laments of diasporic peoples looking back to their ‘homeland’ – in this instance, their ‘home-town/city’, St Petersburg – and nostalgically longing for ‘motherland’, a place that was no more: an imagined space.

The original songs were composed in exile by Sergei (a stateless person) in the treaty port of Shanghai, China. Sergei went on to record and play these songs in his adopted home of Sydney, Australia, as a foreigner once more. *blackBOX* extends this investigation by incorporating the cultural expressions of Other diasporic experiences, as expressed through the music of the displaced people. This creative work is informed by the multimedia design I developed in collaboration with Professor Andrew Jakubowicz for the *Menorah of Fang Bang Lu* interactive documentary *Menorah of Fang Bang Lu* (Online documentary, 25<sup>th</sup> Carnivale Multicultural Arts Festival).

<http://www.transforming.cultures.uts.edu.au/ShanghiaSite>,  
<http://www.cosmoshanghai.net/ShanghaiSite/menorahsplash/index.htm>).

This is an online project exploring the lives of seven families and is structured around seven cultural and social themes, evoking the complex and multidimensional fabric of Shanghai as a crossroads for the Jews of China as well as those who came to Australia (Hall, 1996).

### ***Hypertextuality/intertextuality***

*blackBOX* is an intertextual non-linear narrative, and has its origins in modernist collage and montage aesthetic practices. New-media theorist Lev Manovich traces the historical lineage of the new media text to European and Russian modernist *avant-garde* aesthetics in film, the visual arts, cinema, architecture, engineering, literature and music. He suggests that there are a number of traditional media paths that can be traced and which are brought together in this new form of electronic writing.

One can trace the modernist practice of visual montage to the film concepts espoused by Sergei Eisenstein in the early twentieth century in Russia. Sequences in film utilising editing strategies that juxtapose images, sounds and texts to create dramatic meaning within the cinematic frame have now been synthesised in the virtual editing environment of computer software's non-linear editing interfaces.

These interfaces: Simulate the multi-track environment codified and theorized by Eisenstein in his early film work. The convergence of media into the software environment has transformed the capabilities for digital media production. It is possible to shoot a digital film/video and post-produce the media on the desktop of a multimedia computer (John Conomos discusses notions of new media, an interview conducted at Sydney College of the Arts, 2004). Simultaneously, writing practises have been transformed.

However, Tatiana Nicolova-Houston argues that the open-ended hypertext is in fact significantly prefigured in Byzantine and medieval manuscripts. She attributes the following characteristics to the hypertext (informed by the research of George Landow): non-linearity, multi-vocality, intertextuality and decenteredness (Van Krieken, 2001). Nicolova-Houston argues that medieval manuscripts: act as agents of historical and spiritual illumination, possessing a human feel and touch, with each one being a unique

creation of a unique scribe and illuminator, a piece of art, and, frequently, its creator's masterpiece (Jakubowicz, 2003, p. 8). She claims that these manuscripts: like hypertextual websites or electronic books, consist of composite works of different layers of texts, illustrations, marginal and interlinear glosses and annotations. Medieval bibles, chronicles, works of the Law, and textbooks present examples of a high level of hypertextuality (Manovich, 2003).

## *Aesthetics of interactive media*

Melanie Swalwell argues in *Aesthetics and Hyper/aesthetics: Rethinking the Senses in Contemporary Media Contexts* that the 'immersive sensory experience' of the interactive environment of convergent media (mediated through the intelligent technological systems of the computer) has produced new kinds of artificial (virtual) engagement.

These new modes of engagement include an 'ability to provide a greater range of sensory stimuli, all at once'. As a result, claims were made by promoters of various media – new and old – that consumers were 'driving' convergence by their demands for 'more realistic and "immersive" (multisensory) experiences' (Landow, 1999, p. 156). This implied that immersion resulted from 'stimulating all the senses, often to heretofore unimagined degrees' (Nicolova-Houston, 2003).

The production of creative and experimental interactive art draws from a multitude of disciplines – and has a number of various outcomes which include – cyber art, digital art, web art, information art, interactive art, active art, reactive art and connective (networked) art (Swalwell, 2002, p. 3).

However, these categories, under the rubric 'digital artefact', and non-material (art) object can be traced back to experiments in modernist *avant-garde* conceptual art, which questions: *the relationship between ideas and art... [and] de-emphasizes the value traditionally accorded to the materiality of art objects. It focuses, rather, on examining the preconditions for how meaning emerges in art, seen as a semiotic system* (Swalwell, 2002, p. 3).

The experimental meeting of 'software', 'information technology' and 'art' can be traced to a number of sources, but was pioneered in the museum environment by Jack Burnham in the late 1960s, specifically with his curation of the exhibition *Software, Information*

*Technology: Its New Meaning For Art at the Jewish Museum in New York* (1970). Here, Burnham designed software to function as a testing ground for public interaction with ‘information systems and their devices’.

He conceived ‘software’ as being parallel to the aesthetic principles, concepts or programs that underlie the formal embodiment of the actual art objects, that is, the ‘hardware’ (Bachfischer, 2002, p. 12).

### ***Virtual archive of cultural memories***

In *blackBOX* the subjective figure of the protagonist, Nina, through whom the player/participant experiences and interacts with the virtual spaces and performances, has been informed by psychologist Jean Piaget’s educational theories on perception, learning and development. Piaget argued that learning occurs as a direct result of interaction with the environment...children learn from actions rather than passive observations, and so construct knowledge and understanding themselves. (Shanken, 2001)

Piaget’s theories have been widely debated, and his research has contributed to a ‘taxonomical’ understanding of cognitive learning, affective learning and psychomotor development. This work has implications for the conceptualization of interactive media as an educational, informational system for social interaction and learning. As the player/participant navigates the *blackBOX* interface, they not only gather information but also learn through exploring the way in which the program operates. It is this that allows the player to move through and apprehend the narrative text. Through the participant’s direct interaction with the digital media text, meaning is produced. Knowledge of Nina’s cultural origins are discovered in a non-sequential manner and then ordered through the imagination of the participant.

### ***blackBOXES: digital media as a journey of discovery***

The key concern of *blackBOX* is to call attention to the iconic value of symbols in the virtual environment of digital media. Symbols possess a universal imagery and thus address themselves to the needs of specific individuals or cultures, but in a mythological and psychological language (Burnham, 1970, p. 119). The mobilisation of a series of myths

cross-culturally is strategically at play in the inner workings of the game device. The fact that the icons, signs and symbols from outside dominant western culture are legible inside *blackBOX*, and can be interwoven into the storytelling and narrative process, suggests that there may be a reservoir of symbolism that can be tapped into and which shapes many societies' myths. For example, a central theme operating in *blackBOX* is the quest.

The quest has long motivated narrative progression within the trajectory of storytelling. In particular, this project is influenced by Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*, a film based on Philip K Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* *Blade Runner*'s protagonist, the 'hardboiled' Deckard, searches for his origins (android or human) through the Los Angeles of 2019. The film's *mise-en-scène* centres around an imagining of a futuristic 'Chinatown'. Similarly, Nina's quest is constructed in the work to unveil aspects of her self and her cultural origins. The participant and the girl search together for virtual objects whose meaning represent aspects of her outer world and reveal to her aspects of her inner self. This search mirrors for the player/participant's own search through the text and for self-understanding.

In comprehending the text, the viewer is provoked to consider the cultural artefacts that shape the individual and tap into a deeper reservoir of mythological ruins (Caulton, 1998, p. 18). Mapping a history of the term 'blackbox' incorporates an investigation of the technological implication of the notion 'box'; a device, an instrument and an idea created as a piece of equipment, a vessel for containing cultural artefacts, in the contemporary sense.

Lev Manovich argues in 'Avant-garde as Software' (Hockey, 2001) that the software and windows environment of the computer is indebted to techniques invented by Russian *avant-garde*, left-wing artists in the 1920s. He traces basic computer operations, such as drop-down windows and 'cut and paste' commands, back to Lissitzky's use of movable frames in his 1926 exhibition design for the International Art Exhibition in Dresden (Hockey, 2001).

Manovich thus historically links the development of interface metaphors that we experience today in computer environments to the visualisation of abstract data as compartmentalised 'windows' and 'boxes'. But can we take this analogy back further to antiquity or across cultures? These visual metaphors, the bases of operating systems worldwide, are legible across cultures. Visual literacy and perception exceeds the boundaries of language.

The ability of the 'icon' to convey meaning and narrative is comparable to the religious icon and the contemporary digital icon (which is emptied of any spiritual connotation). However, certain grammars of the visual are undeniably culturally specific, though it could



also be argued that a new global visual language is emerging through the internet. While readable text inside the frame is expressed in the national language, the *lingua franca* of the computer screen is clearly transnational. The framing structures of the Microsoft Windows operating system is reminiscent of antique forms of representation. Nicolova-Houston's exploration of Byzantine and medieval manuscripts, discussed earlier (Guerer, 1994, p. 17), can be extended to the religious 'icon' as a window into spiritual meaning, and the picture space as a window into an imaginary landscape in modernist western abstract and figurative painting (Manovich, 2003).

However, the new environment of digital media converges images, sounds and texts with a different ability, an interactivity with the text. Interaction is extended beyond eyes and hands to the creation of a new 'book' where the hand electronically manipulates and interrogates each new 'composition'. Manovich proposes that the emergence of the term 'new media' in Europe was a reference to 'European artists, designers, architects and photographers', such as Le Corbusier's New Architecture (El Lissitzky, 1923).

Jan Tschichold's New Typography and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy's New Vision (Nicolova-Houston, 2003): Manovich states: 'Although nobody, as far as I know, published something called New Cinema, all the manifestos written during this decade by French, German and Russian filmmakers in essence constitute such a book: a call for a new language of film, whether it was to be montage, 'Cinéma pur' (also known as 'absolute film'), or 'photogénie.' Similarly, although not declared in a book, a true visual revolution also took place in graphic design thus 'making it new' as well (Aleksander Rodchenko, El Lissitzky, Moholy-Nagy, etc.). (Tschichold, 1995)

Manovich explains the return of the word 'new' in the 1990s as not being aligned with a specific media type but, rather, as a generic media. This has now perhaps been replaced by the term 'digital media', referring to the potential *neo-avantgarde* practices and radical cultural innovations inherent in these new cultural forms of electronic media (HTML5, URL websites, computer software games, hypertext and hypermedia applications). (Le Corbusier, 1963)

What once were cinematic, design, architectural, graphic and textual experiments, such as Dziga Vertov's quick cutting techniques in *The Man with a Movie Camera* and his split-screen experiments, and Sergei Eisenstein's montage film making techniques, are reinterpreted. They coalesce and mingle in the televisual, video and internet spheres, due to the availability of imaging programs (Adobe Photoshop) and moving image (compositing) editing software programs such as Adobe After Effects (Manovich, 2003, p. 1). This is also true of contemporary music making software.

## *Poetic reverie*

In the creation (authoring) of non-sequential narratives for the interactive digital media environment of the internet, and other digital work, my central concern has been to reconfigure the gestures of both the parent media (cinema, painting, composition) and the parent cultures. These are mingled alchemically to form the production of a new hybrid text, a convergent media articulation, in the digital realm.

The software programs that produce the creative non-linear narrative metaphorically unleash the 'genie' from the 'lamp' or the 'magic' from the 'box'. The 'genie' is coded as generically Other. Sanskrit, Greek, and Russian (Chinese) culture stand in for the orient, the 'foreign', as represented in orientalist styles of western music, film and literature. However, the 'lamp' becomes the 'box' – the jewelBOX, the chineseBOX, the pandora'sBOX, and the 'blackbox' of the program that I am creating. Metaphorically, the player/participant simulates the mobile agents moving through the electronic service frameworks, entities consisting of code, data and control information (Hohl, 1998, p. 109), migrating between different nodes in the system. This syncretic text weaves together the threads of diasporic cultures; it is a virtual archive, a box of music and memories.

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## **Wires of Wisdom: Orally, Literally, and Experientially Transmitted Spiritual Traditions In The Digital Age**

**Abstract:** This article is discussing the possibilities of new media technologies in the context of transmitting ancient spiritual traditions in various cultural and religious backgrounds. The use of internet as a means to preserve the orally transmitted knowledge of the Aboriginals and Maoris, and in doing so transferring their cultural heritage to their younger generations and interest groups. Following is an extended case study of the Naqshbandi Sufi Order and its specific compatibility of a traditional orientation towards spiritual work among people rather than monastic seclusion and its recent application of digital media resources. Therefore, new technology is being discussed as a logical extension, not without attention being drawn to possible limitations, however.

**Keywords:** Internet, Digital Media, Culture, Tradition, Religion, Sufism

## ***Introduction***

Interestingly, in some cases, environmental factors have led to cultural oddities where language is concerned. For instance, the whistled language developed as a type of oral communication to convey the tonal and rhythmic patterns of syllables over vast distances. Worthy of note, the small isolated town of Kuşköy (its actual translation means Bird Village) in the mountainous Black Sea region of Turkey, has puzzled linguists with the development of what its locals call *kuş dili*, the bird language. The whistled language can be heard for more than half a mile in distance amid rural background noise barriers and adapts standard Turkish syllables into distinct acoustic signals. To demonstrate, the question *Do you have fresh bread?* which in Turkish means *Taze ekmek var mı?* is represented by six separate whistles made by fingers, tongue and teeth.

However, the centuries old practice of bird language is coming to an end in Kuşköy. Once, children had learnt to communicate via whistling before enrolling at school; men and women argued, gossiped and indeed even courted by whistling. Now, however, this form of communication is in rapid decline from daily life, replaced by texting – without a doubt, a far more appropriate mode for such private matters. Under the umbrella of culture and tourism, the town of Kuşköy has held whistling competitions in a bid to rekindle interest in youths. Yet, time and time again, these efforts proved unsuccessful. It appears that cultural preservation is at a loss when faced with the practical needs of today and the advancement of the digital age. (Nijhuis, 2015).

Or is it?

As reported by Reed (1993), according to Professor T.G.H. Strehlow in his studies of the indigenous peoples of Australia, the Aranda tribe in particular, he found a fundamental disunity amongst the Central Australian inhabitants. This disunion, in general terms, does not only account for differences from one tribe to another, but encompasses the differences within the same tribe as well. As a matter of fact, smaller groups and sub-groups of the

same tribe have been known to show disunity extending to various customs, ritualistic ceremonies and religious interpretations. Again Reed (1993, p. 69) refers to Strehlow's observation:

*There is no common system of religion which is embraced by the tribe as a whole; all legends – and hence all ceremonies, since the latter are always dramatizations of portions of the legends – are tied down to definite local centers in each group.' In other words, although myths may marginally or extensively diversify in content, they still possess enough common traits to be part of their universal belief in relation to the ancestral Spirit of the Dream-Time.*

Close observation reveals fascinating differences between the Australian Aboriginals and the Maori people of New Zealand in terms of cultural development. Removed by some 2,000 kilometers of ocean and contrasting ethnological features, the Maori people of New Zealand had developed a distinct monotheistic religion – the cult of Io. According to their esoteric beliefs, Io was the Supreme Being, or the creator and the uncreated, the omniscient and omnipotent. Soon, they instigated a specific system of hierarchy: sacred knowledge was conceded to a higher priestly class known as the Tohunga, whilst members of lower priestly orders were exempt from the Word. Furthermore, whether ordinary people were even permitted to know the name of Io remains an uncertainty. Apart from the higher classes, the common people were disallowed from attending these ceremonies (Reed, 1993).

The ritual chants and practices were guarded in utmost secrecy and, at present, nothing definitive can still be relayed about them. Indeed, the disciplinary precautions of the Tohunga ensured the cult was not open to all. Allegedly, those classed as ordinary minds were unable to appreciate the wisdom and had to be kept at bay. Therefore, only the higher minds of the community who possessed noteworthy abstraction and introspection were granted participatory license. Interestingly, no temple or sacred building was ever erected in the name of Io. The gatherings or ceremonies were conducted in open air, the location always hidden from outsiders. Thus, with no noticeable address or distinguishing invite,

the so-called ordinary minds were left to seek inferior and more approachable deities that were considered suitable to their capabilities and sense. That some of these lower gods were associated with black magic, or makutu, served to justify the proper exclusiveness of the Io cult (Best, 1976).

As documented by Britsch (1981), by the 1850s, the majority of Maoris were converted to Roman Catholic and Protestant Christianity. This was followed by Latter-day Saint missionary work. In 1887 there were 2,573 Latter-day Saints, and by the turn of the century they were almost four thousand members of the Church in New Zealand. As stated by Britsch in 1981 (para. 4): *Most of the Maori tribes, including large numbers in the north, around Whangarei and Bay of Islands, had been introduced to the gospel. In 1901 there were 79 branches. Clearly, since the early years in Hawaii, the Church had not enjoyed so much success with a Polynesian people.*

Today the majority of Maori are Christians. However, electronic media has awakened interest in youths towards their traditional pantheon of gods and the cult of Io with very pleasing results. Indeed, Kiwa Digital's Nga Atua Maori series has enjoyed growing popularity in their digital comics and graphic novellas. The programs offer Maori and English audio with synchronized text, visual effects, musical accompaniment and is available from App Store and Google Play ([www.kiwadigital.com](http://www.kiwadigital.com)). Steven Renata, Kiwa Digital's global business development director, highlighted their intentions as 'a great opportunity to honor the culture of our indigenous folk in Aotearoa, but also contemporize the messaging and the meaning.' According to Renata, this new digital format not only delivers high quality content in an engaging way to Maori youth in New Zealand, as thousands of downloads attest, but has ignited interest in the cult of Io abroad, thus accumulating international market value as well (Gillies, 2015).

The Australian Aboriginals, in some ways, were not as fortunate as the Maori people. The Maoris of New Zealand enjoyed a more agreeable climate with bounteous supplies of birds and fish, the availability of bracken root during all seasons, and plantations of sweet potato

originally brought from the tropical islands of the Pacific. Without a doubt, the abundance of food collected from forests, lakes, rivers and the sea emboldened the need for settlement. In turn, these settlements naturally encouraged common language. Stemming from this togetherness, the passing centuries also saw the development of a somewhat singular culture, which today is called *maoritanga*. On the other hand, the harsh physical terrain and climate of Australia led to a heavily disjointed form of communication (or in some instances totally bereft of) amongst its native population. The mostly nomadic tribes, scattered over a wide area of barren and hostile territory, had no other alternative than to adapt to the conditions and attune to the grueling surroundings. The vastness of the environment, together with its rigid slopes and formations, officiated as a barrier between the peoples. As a result, this separation and remoteness instigated an evolution of language variations and dialects, thus, further escalating the isolation of tribal communities from each other. It must be noted that some sources estimate over 200 different dialects. As noted by Ross (1986), between 1824 and 1859 in the Hunter Valley, New South Wales, L.E. Threlkeld surveyed that the Indigenous peoples had no priesthood, no notion of an altar, no sacrifice, nor any religious service, and that their superstitious observances can scarcely be designated as divine rites, being only mysterious works of darkness, revellings and such like. Nevertheless, Threlkeld continued, the Indigenous tribes were not left without some instinctive feeling of dependence on the great Unknown Being. Moreover, due to the absence of temples or institutionalized religious peers, Threlkeld viewed Aboriginal sacred ceremonies comprised of singing, dancing and the painting of totemic icons as a kind of sport rather than a religious service (Ross, 1986).

One must admit that although collections of Aboriginal myths are extensive during the early colonial era to the mid-1920s, the collectors themselves were generally amateurs. Those described as semi-professional like Daisy Bates (1893-1951) were sadly bereft of formal linguistic skills and were un-schooled in the art of recording variant versions of oral traditions. Whether scriptural text or newsprint, we live in a world dominated by the written word and largely book-bound academic research. Hence, the physical object of the 'sacred book' far eclipses the *modus operandi* of older communication, the oral. As the English

essayist Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) puts it: *I cannot see that lectures can do so much good as reading the books from which the lectures are taken', thus validating the superiority of text as the primary source of knowledge as opposed to verbally transmitted information based on the text itself* (Boswell, 1999, p. 255).

As given by Graham (1987, p. 12), according to German historian and philosopher Oswald Spengler (1880-1936) *the word is a possession of man generally, whereas writing belongs exclusively to the cultured*. As can be deduced, Spengler ascertains the accepted Western viewpoint: the oral is simple and primitive, whilst the written word has become scholarly, and thus, the main engine of civilized advancement. Consequently, language can be associated with culture, but writing is allied with civilization.

In terms of massive information storage, the human mind cannot compete with volumes of texts. In general, the written is permanent, whilst the oral is in danger of being semi-permanently transferred at best, or forgotten at worst. Arguably, there are exceptions: the practice of the Hafiz (male) or Hafiza (female) in Islam, those who have accurately memorized the Qur'an word-for-word. However, it must be noted that they are committing to memory written text, not oral myths. The situation changes vastly concerning the Aboriginals of Australia. The fact that oral tradition can be changed, exaggerated or forgotten through great spans of time, the reliance on sometimes dubious documentation by semi-professionals, and the realization of diversity oftentimes within the same tribe, can be viewed as part of the destiny of communities who have not left behind a written source. In today's digital age, where Aboriginal youth have embraced the use of mobile technology, there are significant movements to assert their culture through digital applications online. The establishing of the storytelling app replaces the traditional oral first-person chronicler with a more synergetic, community-based participatory network. The emergence of digital resources has allowed Indigenous youth to combine stories with images, text and sound – uploaded and shared, facilitating constant interaction with producers and users with minimal outside mediation. Furthermore, this custom-made mobile application is also a



positive contribution towards literacy skills, social connectedness and exchange of knowledge within the Aboriginal community.

To summarize, social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube have become valuable platforms generated by user-content. The escalating use of social media has shaped this connectivity into an effective resource. In turn, this development has led to a type of co-evolution with the public that has become social media dependent. In other words, social practices and engagements are heavily influenced by technology; with the introduction of the telegram, communication emerged in the form of short messages sent over the wire, whilst the telephone enhanced cultural and everyday communication by longer oral interactions regardless of distance. Today, however, wireless communication has enabled one to be constantly in touch regardless of location, carrying the office in your pocket, inventing a new society of addicted networkers, and leaving little time for recreation.

Previously, the oral traditions were viewed as primitive and lost in preservation, whilst the written saw acceptance as means of civilization. Those traditions such as the cult of Io of the Maoris were seen as exclusive to a specific group of priests and initiates. However, today, with the aid of technology we are able to observe an easy form of participation on a wider scale concerning the community. The digital era also secures a revival in those oral traditions which are in danger of being gradually erased or recorded inaccurately. This positive development not only preserves cultural roots and identity, but also promotes communication through internet shares to like-minded individuals, and researchers who intend to explore these ancient beliefs. Moreover, smartphone applications in the case of Kiwa Digital have played a significant role in extending cultural identity through electronic science to attract the interest of youths. In other words, those unwritten traditions that once were frowned upon during the era of book-bound knowledge have now found a place in the digital era to advance and express. It appears that the general opinion of the trustworthiness of the written and the unreliability of the oral are now challenged in this respect. Of course, to what extent remains to be seen. Yet, one thing is certain - the powerful influence of

technology has led to a co-evolution of society in the past, and shall continue to do so in the expansive world of communication. However, already we are witnessing signs that those best able to adapt to the digital environment stand a stronger chance to sustain and move forward.

## ***Naqshbandi Sufism in the 21. Century***

When it comes to Sufism – the mystical dimension of Islam – one of its most visible representations in the digital media universe is the worldwide active Naqshbandi Sufi brotherhood, operating official multimedia channels such as *saltanat.org* and *sufilive.com* as well as countless authorized and unauthorized websites and social media profiles (Stjernholm, 2011).

Although it might seem strange to some to drag inward-directed spiritual contemplation from a monastic cell into the bright spotlight of the world-wide web (Milani & Possamai, 2013), when it comes to the specific nature of the Naqshbandi Sufi Order there might be a certain logic behind it.

As opposed to most of the other more than forty different Sufi ways or *tariqats*, an integral and distinguishing part of the principles of the Naqshbandiyya was introduced by the Order's grandmaster in the thirteenth century – Shaykh Abdel Khaleq al Ghujduwani – and consists in the practice of spiritual contemplation in the presence of others instead of isolated introspective retreats (Kabbani, 2004b).

Weismann (2007) interprets the literary translation as *solitude in the crowd* as a paradox, implying that the spiritual master should involve himself in the social and political affairs of his community.

He further goes on to explain the unmatched scholarly attention directed towards the Naqshbandiyya among all the Sufi brotherhoods during the course of the last three decades with (Weismann, 2007, Preface, xii): *the realization that in the eight centuries or so of its existence masters affiliated with the Naqshbandi tradition (...) time and again acquired positions of influence with the rulers of the day and within their respective communities.*

In other words, Sufism can be considered as an important influence in framing the Muslim world's response to modernity.

Weismann (2007, Abstract) credits the Naqshbandi masters with the successful adoption of *new strategies to cope with the challenges of modernity and postmodernity* and defines the specific strength of the Order *in its characteristic combination of strict adherence to the divine law and active involvement in social and political affairs.*

Another strong principle referred to by Weismann that has been employed by Shaykh Ubaydullah Ahrar - the order's Grandmaster during the fifteenth century – is a ritualized teaching method consisting in communal discourse of spontaneous nature or *suhba* (Lizzio, 2007, p. 20), which might serve as a logical explanation and legitimation of online missionary activities as well.

In so far it should not be too surprising to hear that the followers of the *Haqqani*-branch of the Naqshbandiyya nowadays even have the possibility to consult *e-shaykh.com* for spiritual and religious advice.

### ***Shaykh Nazim and the outward-orientation of the Order***

Named after Cyprus-born Shaykh Nazim Adil al-Haqqani, who is listed as the fortieth master in a chain of inheritance of the Order's leadership (Kabbani, 2004), the widespread

and highly accessible *Haqqani*-branch of the brotherhood managed to establish permanent centers and fellowships in Western Europe and North America (Böttcher, 2006; Damrel, 2006). It must be noted that the remarkable dedication and charismatic personality of its leader has been preserved in numerous written works, on audio-tapes and video-recordings (Raudvere & Stenberg, 2008). Therefore it should not be surprising that even after his physical departure in 2014, Shaykh Nazim is continuing to attract people to his spiritual way through countless archived live-streams and social media profiles (Stjernholm, 2015).

When Weismann (2007) acknowledges the Shaykh's ability to accommodate *the Sufi path to the current realities of globalization* (2007, p. 3), he is considering it as the continuation of a historical pattern that made the grandmasters of the order throughout the centuries modify and adjust their teachings to their socio-political environment - and often enough actively shaping it. As pointed out by Yemelianova (2001, p. 663):

*By the eighteenth century, the majority of Muslims of the eastern North Caucasus were Sufis. (...) The Russian invasion of the North Caucasus in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries stimulated political and military functions of tariqatism which were not characteristic of mainstream Sufism. The Naqshbandi tariqa provided a mobilizing framework for resistance to Russian expansion in the region.*

Furthermore, the active role of the Order in military resistance is stressed by the examples of Chechen Naqshbandi master Shaykh Mansur Ushurma – who, during the eighteenth century *united the Chechens and various peoples of Dagestan into an anti-Russian political-military union* (Yemelianova, 2001, p. 663) – as well as the declaration of a Shari'a-based Islamic territory by the Naqshbandi-affiliated Imam Shamil in the nineteenth century (2001, p. 663 ):

*The Naqshbandi shaykhs and their disciples led the military resistance to the Russians. Ever since, the Naqshbandiis have maintained their active involvement in politics. Under the conditions of extreme polyethnicity and persistent external threat, tariqatism served as a viable basis for the political unification of the North Caucasus.*

As a matter of fact, the spreading of the Naqshbandi teachings in the Western world started already during the first half of the 20th century, when Shaykh Nazim's predecessor, Shaykh Abdullah ad-Daghestani attracted spiritual seekers such as Georges Ivanowitch Gurdjieff (Kabbani, 2004a, p. 435) to his lodge in Damascus or the Gurdjieff-student John G. Bennett, who according to Rawlinson (1993) met the Grandmaster in Beirut, 1955. Both of them have conveyed Sufi-affiliated thought to considerable audiences in Western capitals. According to Damrel (1999) it is the fellowship of the then deceased Bennett who encouraged the opening of the first Naqshbandi-Haqqani-center in London.

Considering that Shaykh Nazim was sent by his master back to Cyprus during the Second World War with the mission to establish centers in Western Europe, one might assume that the Order's latest missionary activities on the internet might have been more approved than condemned as well, since – as Weismann (2007, p. 4) puts it: *Intoxicated mystics have always rejoiced in the bliss of the annihilation of their self in the One, while sober mystics like the Naqshbandis put the stress on their subsistence in order to return to this world and guide others on the same journey.*

Another point to consider that sets the Naqshbandiyya apart from other Sufi brotherhoods is their accessibility - meaning for example that the prescribed daily routine of worship is full of special practices and invocations that are handed down in other Orders in a much more selective and exclusive manner (Kabbani, 2004b). Considering Weismann's remark that *the circulation of manuals for Sufi-conduct and -practices in the tenth and eleventh century helped turn the small groups of spiritual masters and disciples hitherto gathering in privacy into more formal associations with wider social appeal* (2007, p. 5), the embarking of the Naqshbandiyya in the world of social media might just be the legitimate next step in a tradition of orthodoxy and activism that managed to expand from its birthplace Bucharra in Central Asia to worldwide recognition (Hermansen, 2009).

Therefore, the question is: would the trans-migratory nature of digital media content really be able to convey the sophisticated and intensive teaching that is several centuries deep?

## ***The compatibility of old traditions and new media***

It already has been mentioned that there are more than forty different Sufi orders as well as countless off-springs and each one of them applies different methods and techniques of teaching, from strict seclusions and vows of silence to trance-induction and self-mutilation (Trimingham, 1998).

As has been indicated by Mahyuddin, Stapa, and Badaruddin (2013, p. 6) with reference to Wan Suleiman: (...) *the tariqah is interpreted literally as medium and road and technically medium means whatever can deliver to the purpose. It is analogized as the car used to go to the purposed destination.*

Considering this pragmatic view, why not take a shortcut on the digital media highway to deliver the purpose more efficiently? But, then again, what is the purpose of the Naqshbandi Sufi Order?

At this point it is important to note that Sufi brotherhoods in general and the Naqshbandiyya in particular never saw themselves as the keepers and transmitters of book knowledge (Lizzio, 2007, p. 2). As a matter of fact, highly influential scholastic writings from authors such as Ghazali (Gardener, 2007) or Ibn Arabi (Corbin, 2008), as well as the poetic output of Rumi (Friedlander, 1992) has been characteristically done by individuals not necessarily associated or affiliated with Sufi Orders during the course of their lives.

The brotherhoods on the other hand have been traditionally more practically oriented towards the refinement of behavior and conduct (Papas, 2008). It is noteworthy in this context that in one of his last lectures Shaykh Nazim on [saltanat.org](http://saltanat.org/videopage.php?id=7299&name=2013-04-08_tr_IbnArabiHz.mp4) ([http://saltanat.org/videopage.php?id=7299&name=2013-04-08\\_tr\\_IbnArabiHz.mp4](http://saltanat.org/videopage.php?id=7299&name=2013-04-08_tr_IbnArabiHz.mp4)) declared to his followers that they have no permission to actually get involved with the theoretical writings of Ibn Arabi since he considered it of no use for them or even dangerous, given the limited understanding of his students. Consequently, the display of

knowledge without the mastering of one's manners has been judged by the Shaykh on numerous occasions as being of no value.

As opposed to traditional *madrasa* and institutions where students would be introduced to Shari'a-based knowledge of *Quran*, jurisdiction and *Hadith*-science, the *tariqas* focused on the teaching of good manners and proper conduct – in other words, practical knowledge that can't be learned from books but must be experienced (Papas, 2008).

Although stressing the importance of Shari'a-derived book knowledge in order to be able to follow its requirements, Mahyuddin, Stapa, and Badaruddin (2013) highlight the practical aspect of the learning in the context of a Sufi order or *tariqa* as follows (2013, p. 3) : (...) *the shari'ah is a worship to God by carrying out His commands and avoiding His vetoes, the tariqah is the practice of the knowledge (...)*

They further conclude and point out the importance of the master's guidance when they state that the Sufi order *comprises an orderly ritual, rite, pattern of striving and exercise under the shaykh to educate and control evil carnal soul (...) as a source of immoral qualities* (Mahyuddin, Stapa & Badaruddin, 2013, p. 6)

Even though the relevance of the *suhba* as a method of oral instruction has been stressed before, it is more than just the words that are responsible for the formation of the student in the Naqshbandi Sufi way. The student relies deeply on his guide to give an example of excellent behavior and mainly learns by trying to imitate that conduct (Stjernholm, 2011) or, as Massoudi (2002, p. 150) puts it (referring to assumptions of master-disciple relationships in various traditions): (...) *a perfect teacher is like a mirror, reflecting everything back so that the student can see himself/herself.*

Hereby, the quality in the transmission of information between spiritual teacher and student is likened to being as trans-missive as a glass window.

As Lizzio (2007, p. 4) criticized, most relevant anthropological treatments of the matter *neglected the central importance of the shaikh's charisma to the process of spiritual transformation* and – guided by structuralist/functionalist theory – *they stressed the social context shaping belief in the shaikh's charismatic power* by following the analysis of Weber, who *defined charisma as the power of holy men over their followers and was uninterested in the precise nature of the holy man's exceptional powers* and as a sociologist, *he was more intrigued by the social consequences of the holy man-follower relationship that grew out of charisma* (2007, p. 4).

Even if Shaykh Abdullah ad-Daghestani and Shaykh Nazim did urge their listeners to take written notes of their lectures, we might assume that this was done to ensure the preservation of the speeches for a future audience as well as to provide recursive study possibilities. Therefore, written documentation of the lectures seems to be of less relevance, given the systematic recordings on audio-visual media.

And although Lizzio (2007, p. 7) argues that *Sufis maintain detailed biographies of the teachers and that these accounts of their lives also contain didactic tales and instructive sayings to be applied in everyday life*, concluding that *Naqshbandi Sufism constitutes a cumulative tradition, orally, literally, and experientially* it has to be taken into consideration that almost all respective written work deals with practical aspects of the teachers lives or serves to demonstrate their exemplary conduct and behavior (Kabbani, 2004a).

Considering all these efforts to preserve and remember the habitual routine of the masters as a guiding reference, one might even suggest that the main vehicle for progress on the way of the Naqshbandi Sufi Order might be rather to imitate the good manners or *adab* displayed by the Shaykh than to receive – either orally or literally – transmitted initiation (Papas, 2008).



Lizzio himself delivers a possible explanation for the validity of that assumption when he points out that as opposed to other Orders that trace their origins back to the Prophet Muhammed through his grandson and fourth *khalif* 'Ali ibn abi Talib, the Naqshbandiyya claims to refer back to the first *khalif* Abu Bakr as well in the course of an attempt to explain the twin aspects of the Naqshbandi practice – combining esoteric and exoteric elements – and their unusual involvement in wordly affairs (2007, p. 7): (...) *the 'Alid chain represents the esoteric spiritual practices, while the Bakri link signifies strict adherence to the shari'a and the exemplary behavior of the Prophet.*

Therefore, in the case of the Naqshbandi Sufi way, it would be uncharacteristic to apply the concept of a socio-religious cultural practice which is based on the written word. Instead one might even suggest to use the term *aural* tradition – since the presence of the master is crucial in this method (Massoudi, 2002). Considering that the Arabic term *suhba* is derived from companionship, the personal presence and unwavering focus of the listener is of utmost importance for this spiritual flow to be established and maintained. (Papas, 2008, p. 12).

One might assume that this specific setting will probably fail to be re-staged in a live-stream-situation (Silverstein, 2008). However, it might serve as a first contact with the teachings of the Order. In a similar sense the former deputy of Shaykh Nazim, Shaykh Hisham Kabbani, for a long time offered on his website *sufilive.com* the possibility to receive online-initiation to the order but stressed that it should be renewed if possible with Shaykh Nazim himself or authorized deputies in physical form.

Despite the vast online-presence of the once locally-restricted and secretive brotherhoods preserving mystical Islam (Hermansen, 2009), nobody should expect to undergo a distance learning Sufi training. Nevertheless, although online activities may be limited in its capacity to transmit the full scope of inherent content, it might prove to be of importance in countering the well-organized propaganda from fundamentalist movements like Saudi Arabian-sponsored *wahhabi*-sect, its *salafi*-offspring or extremist groups like *jihad*-organisations (Silverstein, 2008). One just needs to consider the strategies of the Russian government to use Sufism in Chechnya in order to push back what they consider the US/Saudi-financed influence of *wahhabi* thought (Yemeljanova, 2003).

Especially for the growing number of new Muslims the first contact with Islam might be crucial and, often enough one click can make the difference between embracing a message of love, tolerance, respect and correcting your own flaws or being lured into anger, bitterness, violence-promoting ideas and self-styled missionary work to correct others who are supposed to be wrong (Karim, 2002; Raudvere & Stenberg, 2008).

At this point there are several official digital media-channels offering archived audio- and video-lectures of Shaykh Nazim as well as his son and successor Shaykh Mehmet Adil ar-Rabbani (Stjernholm, 2015) and live-broadcasts of the Friday prayer in the Order's center in Lefke/Cyprus ([saltanat.org](http://saltanat.org), [hakkani.org](http://hakkani.org)).

*Sufilive.com* is keeping track of the scholarly and missionary activities of Shaykh Hisham Kabbani as well as broadcasting his lectures and weekly congregations in his center in Fenton/Michigan (Damrel, 2006).

## ***Conclusion***

In our fast developing times, digital media continues to secure boundless access to resources in the name of research and knowledge such as strenuous study, leisurely informative readings, cultural and identity preservation, and of course, food to the inquisitive mind. What can be seen in advancement is a growing database that can chiefly satisfy the need to retain cultural information and transfer it online using various tools and devices to attract youth on an interactive level in some indigenous societies.

Likewise, not so dissimilar tools can be and are employed by the Naqshbandiyya to sustain their online presence. Easy accessibility at the users own pace and time, coupled with the drive to intergroup learning and digestible pieces of complex traditional knowledge are effective avenues to reach today's eyes and ears.

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*Philip Effiom Ephraim*

**Nigerian Media in Transition – From Folk to Viral:  
Comparative Analysis of *Kwaghir* Puppet Theater and *Ogas at  
the top***

**Abstract:** New technologies offer many possibilities to the folk medium of puppetry by providing more durable materials of production, more realistic animation and imaging, a global audience via the internet especially social media. Using qualitative case study approach, observation techniques and YouTube data, this study comparatively analyzed Kwaghir and Ogas at the top to uncover how methods and content differ between folk and contemporary Nigerian Puppet Theater. Using nine criterias, this paper argues that although Kwaghir is gradually incorporating new media technologies, it largely preserves its cultural elements and communal functions. On the other hand, Ogas at the top marks a departure from communal themes and local audiences to more radical representations of current socio-political issues and an appeal to global online audiences. This paper notes that while new media technologies offer numerous benefits to puppetry, several intimate aspects of the art form are in danger of being lost in transition.

**Keywords:** *Puppet theater, Nigeria, Ogas at the top, Kwaghir*

## ***Introduction***

Puppetry is an age old art form and medium of communication. The term puppetry describes the art and performance of manipulating inanimate objects called puppets (Adeyemi, 2006). Puppets as inanimate objects are made from virtually any kind of material; wood, plastic, bone, metal to name a few. Even the human fingers could be creatively be manipulated as puppets (Engler & Fijan, 1980). Further, Engler and Fijan argue that dolls and robots do not classify as puppets as puppetry requires human agents called puppeteers, to create illusions of life.

Puppets convey realistic illusions of life through movement depending on their construction; thus encouraging audiences to suspend disbelief and accept them as animate objects. Puppetry present figures through a site of signification rather than as real human beings (Tillis, 1999). Puppets are manipulated in a variety of ways; with the hands (sock puppets), with strings (string puppets or marionettes), with rods (rod puppets), with the use of shadows (shadow puppets) and with the use of the whole body, such as wearable foam latex puppets (Asch, 2010).

Puppetry is originally a folk media of communication. Daudu (2009) defines folk or traditional media as all organized production and exchange of meanings within rural communities which includes dance, drama, proverbs, folktales, songs etc. Folk media refer to media close to the heart of a people far away from mainstream media. Traditionally, it conveys their peculiar history, analyzes current issues and forecasts future events (Fernandez, 1996). Chiovoloni (2004) views folk media as the totality of local responses to communicative needs for information, education, entertainment and social action.

From the earliest civilizations till present, puppets have served as communicative appendages of man; providing tools for communicating the ideas and needs of different societies (Blumenthal, 2005). Ackerman (2005) argues that puppets are ideological tools; their language use and body movements are all tailored to convey specific the intentions of



the puppeteer. Ackerman argues further that through the innocence and anonymity of puppets, puppeteers are able to portray sensitive issues which may normally be censored on mainstream media.

The history of puppetry goes back more than 3000 years with ancient relics found in Egypt and Greece (Blumenthal, 2005). However Asch (2010) argues that ancient puppet relics found in the Middle East date back over 5000 years. Thus, puppetry is common to nearly all cultures. Latshaw (2012) argues that in ancient civilizations, puppetry was strongly connected to religious rituals and myths. Furthermore, Latshaw surmises that puppets were created as physical manifestations of the gods; who were believed to control the unfriendly natural elements. Primitive puppets served as links between the human and spirit worlds.

The ancient Egyptians were renowned for their puppets and inspired puppet traditions in Asia and Europe (Asch, 2010). Indians developed string puppetry which addressed religious themes and political satires. The ancient Chinese became renowned for their shadow puppets called *pi-ying xi* (theater of lantern shadows). The Japanese on their part developed highly complex puppets called *Baranku*. Blumenthal (2005) notes that the Japanese *Baranku* puppet theater became highly complex and soon required only professionally trained puppeteers. The Turkish borrowed from Chinese traditions and developed their *Karagoz* and shadow puppet theater traditions. European puppetry traditions were inspired from ancient Greek puppetry and continued to develop through the Middle Ages and beyond (Latshaw, 2012). Puppetry in Sub-Saharan African countries like Nigeria and Kenya largely borrowed elements from ancient Egyptian puppetry.

### ***Puppetry in Nigerian Cultures***

Nigeria is Africa's most populous country with a population of over 170 million. The country has a rich diversity of human and cultural resources. Nigeria has 374 known ethnic groups comprising three major groups; Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo and other minority groups all speaking different languages (Mustapha, 2006). Puppetry is not common to all Nigerian

cultures. Anthropologists have found puppetry traditions among Nigeria's three major ethnic groups and also within a few minority groups.

Rubin (1997) argues that the puppetry tradition in Nigeria primarily aims to entertain and educate and often includes the use of masks and not only manipulated objects as in the Western sense of puppetry. The Yoruba of western Nigeria incorporate the use of masks in their *Alarinjo* and *Egungun* traditions. The Igbos of eastern Nigeria have a rich tradition of masquerades called *Mmanwu* (Chiene, 1990). The Hausa, Kalabari, Anang, Ibibio and Tiv comprise ethnic groups which have complex and well-defined puppetry traditions. Puppetry performances incorporate the use of dancing, singing, carving and scenery (Rubin, 1997). Of all puppetry traditions in Nigeria, the Tiv *Kwaghir* is widely regarded as the most prominent and often represents the face of Nigerian puppetry.

## ***Kwaghir***

The term *Kwaghir* literary means 'magical folktale' and describes the composite art form of the Tiv people of Benue State in Central Nigeria (Hagher, 2003). The Tiv numbering over 4 million people, comprise one of Nigeria's main minority groups and are renowned for their prowess in agriculture as well as their rich artistic and cultural heritage (Harper, 1997; Ephraim, 2009). *Kwaghir* combines art, folktales, poetry, drama, dance, instrumentation and most importantly, Puppet Theater. *Kwaghir* features puppets and masquerades which enact the activities of humans, animals, diseases and evil spirits (See Figures 1-3). The themes are always woven around the socio-economic problems of the people.

Furthermore, the history of *Kwaghir* is the history of resistance of the Tiv against British colonialists. During the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century British colonialists invaded Tiv lands and tried to impose Christianity and taxes on the people. The British were met with stiff resistance from the Tiv. Due to superior weaponry, the British conquered, massacred hundreds of Tiv people in 1939 to drive home their point (Hagher, 2003; Akinsipe, 2015). Early forms of *Kwaghir* were staged to protest colonial rule. Harper (1997) notes that it was

in 1966 during the Nigerian Civil War that the Tiv established *Kwaghir* as a composite art form.

### ***Puppetry Digital and Online***

The internet and other new media technologies have given new meaning to previously folk media forms like Puppet Theater, dance and storytelling. According to Dixon (2007) the performance practices of these traditional media forms are increasingly being enhanced through the application of novel media technologies. Dixon (2007) adds that the art of Puppet Theater has especially benefited in terms of imaging and special effects. Mazalek et al (2011) state that traditional puppetry is increasingly being merged with new interfaces and virtual environments to enhance greater artistic appeal. New media technologies have led to the production of 3 dimensional animated puppets which are often combined with highly complex imaging and special effects. However Levenson (1992) argues that technology should not be used to create puppetry only to record it. Performance should always be under the control of a live human puppeteer. Puppetry must be performed in real time and recordings can be edited after performance.

The internet has especially helped to expand the audience base of Puppet Theater from communal to millions worldwide via websites and social media. For example the *XYZ Show* and *Ogas at the Top* two puppetry series by Kenyan based Buni TV; reach international audiences of over 6 million on via the organization's website and YouTube (Wakoba, 2014).

### ***The Ogas at the top show***

*Ogas at the top* show is an online based puppet theater series produced by Buni TV. Buni TV is a service of Buni Media, a multimedia company operating from Kenya and the USA. Buni TV is described as a leading African web, mobile and video on demand (VOD)

platform. It was founded on April 18, 2012 by Marie-Lora Mungai (CEO of Buni Media) and Gado Mwampembwa. The word *Buni* is Swahili, meaning innovation and describes the high level of creativity and communicative output of Buni TV staff (<https://buni.tv/page/about-us/>).

Buni TV's popularity is mainly attributed to the successes of two of its puppet shows; the *XYZ Show* and *Ogas at the top*. The *XYZ Show* is the brain child of Gado Mwampembwa. Gado Mwampembwa who drew inspiration from two established satirical puppet theater shows in the UK and France; *Spitting Image* and *Les Guinols de l'info* (English: News puppets). The *XYZ Show* was first aired on May 17, 2009.

Like its British and French predecessors, the *XYZ Show* also employed latex puppets and quickly gained a reputation for fearlessly exposing corruption and injustice among Kenya's political elites and also for representing other social actors and events (Katz, 2012). The immense success of the *XYZ Show* among Kenyan and African audiences inspired the need for the idea to be transferred to Nigeria, Africa's largest economy hence the birth of the *Ogas at the top* show.

The title *Ogas at the top* captures the concept of 'Oga' – a term in Nigerian pidgin that describes powerful and influential people among whom political and economic power circulates in Nigeria. Atieno (2014) argues that *Ogas at the top* was designed to demystify leadership by a few big men in Nigeria. *Ogas at the top* is produced by Gado Mwampembwa and Marie-Lora Mungai. The first episode of the show was aired on March 9, 2014. Episodes are conceived and written by a talented team of Nigerian writers comprising; Niyi Ademoye, Tolu Ogunlesi, Numero Unoma and Sodi K. alongside a team of highly creative puppeteers, voice artists, visual and music as well as sound experts.

The series ran throughout 2014 and continues well into its second season in 2015. In less than two years of its existence, *Ogas at the top* has since gained a growing reputation for its humorous yet factual representation of Nigeria's political elites as well as other socio-cultural actors and events. The show ran throughout 2014 and continues well in to its second season in 2015. The series has attracted a lot of attention from Nigerian, African

and international audiences. In 2015 the show won the Mohammed Amin African Media Award for best mobile video series. The show was nominated in the best comedy category for the Creative Industries Award and in the best online video category in the African Magic Viewer's Choice Awards (Akan, 2014).

## ***Research Question***

How do contrastive features of *Kwaghir* and *Ogas at the top* reflect the transition from folk to digital online puppetry in Nigeria?

## ***Methodology and Data Collection***

This study employed the qualitative paradigm of research relying on the case study approach and observation. Esterberg (2002) argues that the qualitative method strives to understand social processes in context by exploring the meanings of social events and those involved in them. The qualitative method provides answers to *how* and *why* questions about people, events and media texts as Patton (1987) states that qualitative research often begins by asking *how* and *what* in an attempt to gaining in-depth understanding of people and situations.

Case study as an approach of qualitative research relies on the collection and analysis of past literature and fresh data on phenomena being investigated (Klenke, 2008). Creswell (2007) argues that the main business of the case study approach is to understand phenomena through the interpretation of data. As case study, the author analyzed *Kwaghir* and *Ogas at the top* as to show how Nigerian Puppet Theater is transiting from folk to digital online spaces. Select YouTube videos of both puppet performances were referenced as primary data.

Observation is the purposive and systematically planned qualitative technique of watching or looking at events, activities or behavior to be studied (Obasi, 1999). Okoro (2001) argues

that observation is the deliberate watching or viewing of phenomena to ascertain what happened or is happening. Okoro argues further that observation could be participant or non-participant. In participant observation the researcher is directly involved in what is going on; the researcher has face to face contact with phenomena being studied. In non-participant observation, the researcher views phenomena from an objective distance.

The study used both participant and non-participant observation. The author had since 2009 during research for his MA Thesis, developed and sustained keen interest in *Kwaghir* by attending several live performances and documenting important features for use, as future reference. Due to financial and time constraints and in order to get current data on *Kwaghir*, the author relied on YouTube videos. The author searched and viewed all recent recordings of *Kwaghir* posted on YouTube. For data on *Ogas at the top*, the author watched all episodes posted on the *Ogas at the top* YouTube Channel (<https://www.youtube.com/user/OgasAtTheTop>). The author watched all episodes posted over the time frame of one year (from March 2014 to March 2015). This time frame was considered particularly necessary to get an overview of the show from its first episode of in March 2014 up until its 2<sup>nd</sup> season in March, 2015.

The above qualitative approaches were considered preferable to quantitative methods as the study aimed to gain deeper understanding of the background contexts of surrounding the production and distribution of *Kwaghir* and *Ogas at the top* and not necessarily to obtain statistical data.

## ***Results and Analysis***

Search for videos of *Kwaghir* on YouTube yielded only two significant videos of 111 videos. Unlike other videos, the two videos lasted longer than five minutes and contained more observable detail.

The two videos can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CVdvKY9DBqY> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c-Ysd5YQS3Q> respectively. For *Ogas at the top* the

author used YouTube's video filtering facilities to select all episodes posted from March 2014 to the last episode in March, 2015. The search yielded a total of 68 videos. All selected videos of *Kwaghir* and *Ogas at the top* were viewed a total of 5 times in order to note important details. After the purposive viewing, the author noted 9 criteria which to analytically compare both puppetry performances.

### ***Kwaghir and Ogas at the top Compared***

*Kwaghir* and *Ogas at the top* represent two traditions of Nigerian puppetry; a transition from folk to contemporary. Both traditions can be analytically compared in terms of:

#### *a. Authorship/Ownership and Ideology*

Authorship of *Kwaghir* is largely communal with Tiv communities having their own *Kwaghir* troupe especially at the local government level. The Benue State government also maintains an active *Kwaghir* group as part of its official cultural troupe. The state *Kwaghir* group performs regularly at local, national and international festivals. However the last two decades have witnessed an increase in the number of privately owned troupes. *Kwaghir* conveys communal ideologies reflecting the people's historical experiences and peculiar socio-cultural problems. Authorship of *Ogas at the top* is private. The show is produced and owned by Kenyan based Buni TV. Buni TV's executive producers together with their talented teams of Nigerian writers and artists determine content, production and mode of transmission. As with all privately owned media, the contents of the show convey the ideologies and political standpoints of its producers (Akter, 2009).

### *b. Social function*

*Kwaghir* predominantly addresses local issues and audiences. It has a communal function. It conveys the people's history, religion and addresses socio-cultural problems occurring within a particular Tiv community. *Ogas at the top* addresses national and international issues and audiences and has a contemporary outlook. Its content is largely drawn from current socio-political events in Nigeria. It serves to sensitize the Nigerian public on hot political issues especially events of power abuse by the Nigerian ruling class. Unlike *Kwaghir*, *Ogas at the top* relies mainly on popular culture to capture the audience interests.

### *c. Materials of Production*

*Kwaghir* puppets are made of a variety of material; wood, raffia, metal etc. Materials are often sourced locally from the community. The same materials are also used to construct scenery. The puppets are operated by rods from underneath a platform thus producing a two dimensional outlook. Harper (1997) argues that *Kwaghir* puppets are doll-like in appearance. During performance, puppets are mounted on movable raffia covered platforms.

The puppets in *Ogas at the top* are made from foam latex, a product of rubber. Unlike *Kwaghir* puppets which have generally cold and stiff appearances, *Ogas at the top* puppets are very lifelike; bearing very close resemblance to the human subjects they signify. The use of foam latex allows for the expression of a variety of complex of human emotions on the faces of the puppets. *Ogas at the top* puppets are generally more convincing than *Kwaghir* puppets.



#### *d. Iconic representations*

Representation in *Kwaghir* is rich and diverse. Humans, animals, spirits and diseases are represented as subjects in performance. *Ogas at the top* portrays only human subjects; predominantly powerful political figures in Nigeria and notable international figures are occasionally represented. A frequent example is CNN's Christiane Amanpour who interviews Nigeria's immediate past president, Goodluck Jonathan and immediate past finance minister, Ngozi Iweala in Episodes 1 and 12 of Season 1.

#### *e. Diversity of Content*

The cultural text of *Kwaghir* is very rich; comprising dance, drama, acrobatics, song, instrumentation and puppetry. Human actors and puppet characters partake actively during these performances. In *Ogas at the top* only the puppets are seen onscreen. The episodes are mainly in the style of short drama sketches lasting an average of two minutes. Some episodes are purely musical in style; the puppets sing and dance throughout. Unlike *Kwaghir* which relies on folk music, music and dance in *Ogas at the top* are adapted from current musical hits by Nigerian and international artistes.

#### *f. Language*

*Kwaghir* puppets are silent. Iorapuu (2007) argues that the silence of the puppets is particularly significant to symbolize the silencing and massacre of the Tiv by British colonialists for refusing to pay taxes in 1939. Language use during performance is mostly in the form of music sung by the accompanying band of singers, dancers and instrumentalists. The songs are strictly in Tiv language as spoken and understood by members of the community. Dancers and instrumentalists provide not just only musical interest but help to explain or reinforce the messages being enacted by the puppets. Hagher (2003) notes that each episode is preceded by an announcement by the narrator called *Orshuwa*. The accompanying songs are based on the storyline of the particular folktale on which the entire performance is rooted. Unlike in *Kwaghir*, the puppets in *Ogas at the top*

are very vocal. The puppets' language is use is highly complex in terms of the grammar, accent and code mixing to effectively represent particular political actors and socio-political situations. English is predominantly used, although often flavored with a mixture of Nigerian English and pidgin as well as a variety of indigenous language like Yoruba and Hausa.

*g. Availability and Access*

*Kwaghir* is staged periodically; often during the Nigerian dry season between the months of November and December (Hart, 2014). The staging of *Kwaghir* during these months is to avoid the interference of rain. The performance of *Kwaghir* is also timed to coincide with the end of year festivities of Christmas and New Year. Occasionally, *Kwaghir* is staged indoors by the state cultural troupe in honor of special guests. Performances are seldom recorded for future reference. *Ogas at the top* is available 24/7 online and is accessible as long as one has good internet access to watch YouTube and online videos on the Buni TV website.

*h. Audience size*

The audience of *Kwaghir* is largely communal. Audiences often range from a few hundreds during theatrical performances to a few thousands during communal festivals. Audiences often comprise a mixture of local citizens, visitors from neighboring communities and occasionally, international tourists. *Kwaghir* is only enjoys mass visibility during national arts and culture festivals. Unlike *Kwaghir*, *Ogas at the top* has a huge and growing online global audience numbering millions. For example, the episode 'Personally' shared on May 18, 2014, had 260,141,000 YouTube views as of 21/08/2015.

In order to get a comparative overview of the international/online popularity of both puppet shows, the author carried out an internet search using the top three most popular internet search engines so appraise the number of internet mentions. The three search engines were

selected from a list of the top 10 most popular search engines complied by [www.reliable.softnet](http://www.reliable.softnet). Two search phrases were used; ‘Kwaghir Puppet Theater’ and ‘Ogas at the top show’. The results of the search are shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Showing results of online searches using major search engines (21/08/2015)**

<b>Search Engine</b>	<b><i>Kwaghir Puppet Theater</i></b>	<b><i>Ogas at the top show</i></b>
Google search	227	62, 300
Internet explorer – Bing	14, 700,000	1, 380,000,000
Yahoo search	14, 200,000	237,000,000

The figures in Table 1 clearly show a huge disparity in the online popularity of both puppetry shows. *Ogas at the top* in less than two years has attained greater international popularity than *Kwaghir*.

*i. Media of transmission*

*Kwaghir* is often staged live at events and occasionally on theater stage. Many performances in rural communities often take place undocumented. It was only during the late 1990s that the Benue State Arts Council began to take serious steps to document performances of *Kwaghir* on video tapes and compact discs (Ephraim, 2009). The author also observed that *Kwaghir* recordings were first shared online in 2009 on YouTube. In contrast, *Ogas at the top* relies strictly on new media technologies and the internet for its transmission. To further analyze the international visibility of both shows, the author also conducted a YouTube search for videos of *Kwaghir* and *Ogas at the top*. The results of the YouTube search are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Showing results of YouTube Search (21/08/2015)**

<b><i>Kwaghir Puppet Theater</i></b>	<b><i>Ogas at the top Show</i></b>
111	470

The figures in Table 2 show that *Ogas at the top* has more than twice the number of *Kwaghir* related videos on YouTube; a difference of 359 more videos.

### ***Some Projected Negative Consequences***

Puppetry has historically been linked with community. Puppetry, originally folk art and media, was developed to serve the community as a medium for entertainment, education and mass mobilization to socio-political action. Within Nigerian ethnic groups with strong traditions of puppetry, puppets are the foundation and record of history, religion and indeed the entire culture of the people. Hagher (2003) argues that *Kwaghir* is the evidence of the originality of the Tiv people; it forms the nucleus of their traditions, culture and mores.

Although with numerous advantages, the new digitization and transfer of Nigerian puppetry to online spaces has some salient negative consequences. First, the historical and cultural contents of the puppetry text stand the danger of neglect in favor of popular events and cultural fads. For example *Ogas at the top* focuses only on current national socio-political issues; historical and other cultural issues are not addressed.

Secondly, contemporary Nigerian puppetry has the likelihood of creating public exclusion. The public for which puppetry was meant to serve is likely to be distanced from the art form. Many Nigerians still live below the global poverty index and lack access and technical knowledge of new media technologies. Electricity, internet speed and stable mobile network are still major challenges in many Nigerian communities (Ephraim, 2013). With the transition of Puppet Theater to online platforms, many Nigerians will be

technologically constrained from benefiting from the important public messages disseminated the medium. For example, how many Nigerians are aware of *Ogas at the top* despite its immense political significance?

Thirdly is the problem of media commercialization. The use of new media and online spaces do not come cheap. Media houses have bills to pay hence the likelihood of transferring running costs to audiences. Future audiences will most likely have to pay some form of subscription to gain access to puppet shows and there is a danger that in coming years many Nigerians may be priced out of their love for Puppet Theater.

### ***Closing Discussion***

The media sphere in Nigeria is undergoing rapid transformation with the increasing proliferation of new media technologies. The past ten years have witnessed the availability of multiple media platforms and a rise in citizens' participation in political issues. As Nigeria marches forward in to a new era of hope and change, new avenues for public expression like online puppetry are needed to foster Nigeria's young democratic culture. The place of puppetry in contemporary Nigerian society becomes even more relevant in order to hold the government of the day to account on its promises to the citizens. The Nigerian government on its own part needs to encourage Puppet Theater. The government can do this by providing support in form of; funding, materials, facilities and manpower training for local puppeteers.

*Kwaghir* and *Ogas at the top* represent the two faces of Nigerian puppet media; the old and the new. As explored in this study, both puppet traditions have their fair share of strengths and weaknesses. However, the strengths of both can be used complementarily. For example, producers of *Kwaghir* will need to broaden their appeal by incorporating more contemporary issues alongside cultural themes. While it is good to preserve cultural elements, several aspects and techniques in *Kwaghir* need upgrading.

The producers of *Ogas at the top*, need to map out strategies to reach out to Nigerians in rural communities. People at the grassroots represent groups of politically vulnerable Nigerians in serious need of political sensitization on the happenings within the Nigerian government. The production of special episodes in indigenous languages available through mobile apps and syndicated community screenings of the show are among several options of reaching out to local audiences.

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*Nalan Linda Fraim*

## **Facebook Support Groups: New Communication Systems in Health**

**Abstract:** This study discusses the possibilities of Facebook support groups as an online-alternative for persons who are looking for mutual encouragement concerning health issues. Specifically, the discussion is focusing on groups providing support for people struggling with the aftermath of bariatrical surgery. Interaction patterns within respective networks are being analyzed and matched with traditional support group functions to demonstrate the efficiency of the online version.

**Keywords:** Social Networks, Health, Support Groups, Facebook

## ***Introduction***

Internet, its public accessibility and its introduction to the public domain for public access, the way we communicate and behave has changed (Weaver, Lindsay & Gitleman, 2012). Prior to this development, traditional communication was primarily between two people and in general, face to face; however, this model of communication eventually evolved and changed in parallel with the technological developments in time. With the internet becoming more widely used and accommodating for extensively larger masses, the traditional term "mass communication" eventually evolved and developed and now can be denoted as a large group (mass) of people communicating simultaneously from different locations, whereas prior forms of communication with the masses were uni-directional rather than multi-directional in nature (Chaffee & Metzger, 2001).

Actually, forms of communication and so-called technologies of communication have been developing since man has existed. Historically older technologies, unlike prehistoric communication means and modalities, like grunting, picture drawing, and primitive spoken languages evolved into more modern and personal communication methods such as letters sent via messengers, newspapers, telegram, telegraph, radio, telephone, television, and facsimile – which have been referred to as the *new media* (Yzer & Southwell, 2008). Although some are still used widely, depending on the country and its technological infrastructure development, all of the above methodologies appear to be losing their novelties and *fanciness* as a result of the constant development of newer and faster communication technologies and systems like electronic and mobile technologies (Weaver, Lindsay, & Gitelman, 2012). According to Chou, Hunt, Beakj, Mose and Hesse (2009), approximately 69 percent of the US population has access to the internet. However, over the years, these ratios increased and in 2015, it was reported that 91percent of the US adult population uses email, 67 percent use text messaging, and 50 percent use social networking (Pew Research Center, 2015). Even within the Internet, the development of new communication programs like Skype, Facebook, and Twitter allows masses of people to connect and communicate instantly with others from wherever they are and establish a

connective link without any problems. In addition to establishing a connection and communication, these social frameworks also provide the opportunity for information exchange outside of the Internet (Yzer & Southwell, 2008). Vural and Bat (2010) conducted a study with communication majors in Turkey and found that 32 percent used social media to waste time, to chat with online friends (18.5%), to update their profile (13.2%), to catch up on what friends were doing (9.7%), to find new friends (6.9%), play games (3.1%). As a result the way and means we use and have used to communicate via using traditional and regular technology is rapidly changing (Baruah, 2012), especially with new integrative mobile technologies, and is much different than what we grew up with – as these communicative *ideas* were once embedded in science fiction film scripts and screenplays.

## ***The Internet***

The internet was initially developed in the 1960s by the Department of Defense's Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPANET) to facilitate communication between the ARPA computer terminals. ARPANET is considered to be the predecessor of the internet. In 1969 the first stable link between multiple computers was established. The first domain was registered in 1985 and in 1989 TCP/IP communication network protocols were established to provide services to businesses. In 1990, CERN scientists developed the very first prototype of what we know today to be the World Wide Web, which was followed by the development of HTML for the sharing of hypertext documents. In 1993, the American White House established itself online, in 1994 Amazon.com was developed, in 1995 Microsoft systems developed Windows 95, in 1998 Google was created, and in 1999 music downloading and piracy began with the development of Napster, which was later shut down (New Media Institute, 2014). All of these rapid developments not only fostered larger quantities and capacities of communication between larger masses but also set forth a need to satisfy a larger market of demand that literally mirrored everyday life's routine. Interestingly, with the development of mobile technologies, the internet is no longer the

sole source or technological framework that houses all relevant sources of information (Yzer & Southwell, 2008).

## ***Social Networking Sites & Social Media***

According to Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) there are six different types of social media that currently exist: (1) collaborative projects (Wikipedia); (2) blogs & microblogs (Twitter); (3) content communication (You Tube); (4) social networking (Facebook); (5) virtual game worlds (World of Warcraft); and (6) virtual social worlds (Second Life).

By 2004, various social networking sites (SNS) were created and today, one of the most popular SNS's is Facebook, which had approximately 21 million users by the year 2007. Vural and Bat (2010) found that 85.9 percent of their sample had used at least one social media outlet where 82.4 percent of the participants spent a majority of their online time on Facebook. Also, 55 percent of their sample logged on to a social media outlet everyday and 41.1 percent spent anywhere between one and three hours at this particular social media outlet. Ballantine and Stephenson (2011) reported that 58 percent of their sample spent 1-10 hours per week and that 30 percent of their sample spent 11-25 hours a week on Facebook. Today, almost everybody who is not technologically challenged and has an internet connection has a Facebook user profile. According to current statistics by Facebook (2015) as of June 30, 2015, there were a total of 1.49 billion monthly active users and 1.31 billion mobile users. Interestingly, approximately 81.3 percent of Facebook users have been reported to be from outside of the United States and Canada (Facebook, 2015).

Facebook is considered to be a SNS because it allows people to foster, create, maintain, contact, and keep in touch with old and new friends, family, and professional contacts. In addition, although SNS's are not necessarily topic specific, they can be extended to almost every aspect of life and SNS's have the capacity to not only establish various communities online but also shape that particular community as a whole (Ellison, Steinfeld, & Lampe, 2010). With the development of Facebook, computer mediated communication took a leap

into an entirely new direction, especially with the development of online support groups (OSG). Given this opportunity, individuals were able to carry the everyday understanding of a traditional support group into the virtual domain where they could access the group easily, at any time, and from anywhere as a part of their daily routine. As a result, computer mediated support groups not only allowed individuals who shared a common denominator to meet, share, inform and support each other but also provided all of these services on a 24/7 basis, which is not available with traditional support groups that meet only once a week for a few hours (Mustafa, Short & Fan, 2015; Nimrod, 2012).

### ***Advantages, Disadvantages & Benefits of OSG's***

OSG's have many advantages for its users. According to White & Dorman (2001) OSG's are accessible 24/7. This allows users to turn to OSG's whenever they desire or feel the need to. A second advantage of OSG's is that when compared to face-to-face interactions, where an immediate response or reaction is required once a message is relayed, OSG participants can answer or post anything they like at their own pace, when they feel like doing so. With this in mind, if the OSG participant does not feel like answering a post, then they do not have to. This level of convenience resolves any unwanted or uncomfortable communications between OSG members whereas in traditional face-to-face communication, not giving an immediate response or walking away from an ongoing conversation may lead to a variety of negative or hostile ideas between the communicating members. A third advantage of OSG's is that they remove all potential geographical boundaries and barriers when communicating between members. One member can be living in North America and another member could be in the Middle East but still they can actively communicate regardless of the distance and time differences. As long as the person has a technological device with an Internet connection, geography no longer becomes a barrier in establishing communication through OSG's. Another major advantage of using social media outlets and OSG's is the possibility to share a common piece of information, mutual or exclusive experiences, ask questions or even provide reciprocal emotional

support among and to different people (Baruah, 2012; Eysenbach, Powell, Engelsakis, Rizo, & Stern, 2004; White & Dorman, 2001); however, along with these advantages, one of the greatest disadvantages of using social media is the possible invasion of privacy (Baruah, 2012). In addition to invasion of privacy, one of the major risks and disadvantages of using social media outlets as a source of information is the risk of acquiring wrong, distorted, false, or even misleading information (Avcı & Avşar, 2014). This of course can lead to incorrect speculations and wrong decision making on behalf of the information seeker.

### ***OSG Interactions***

Interactions within social media platforms establish social capital, which is defined as the accumulation of various resources through social relationships (Coleman, 1988; as cited in Ellison, Steinfeld, & Lampe, 2007). Social capital allows individuals to draw on these resources like useful information, sharing of personal experiences, and the capacity to organize groups (Paxton, 1999). As a result, these various forms of social capital have been linked to psychological well-being, increased self-esteem, and greater satisfaction with life (Bargh & McKenna, 2004; Helliwell & Putnam, 2004).

Hwang, Ottenbacher, Green, Cannon-Diehl, Richardson, Bernstam, & Thomas (2010) identified six subthemes of interactions in OSG's: (1) testimony, (2) recognition for success, (3) accountability, (4) friendly competition, (5) humor, and (6) face-to-face interaction. In addition to sharing personal experiences, members of OSG's have the opportunity to read personal accounts, experiences, successes, and failures of other members. The sharing of these testimonies helps members encourage and motivate each other in dealing with their issues. In addition, members help provide positive recognition for gained successes, even if they are small in magnitude. As members encourage, motivate, and provide recognition for their peers in the OSG, members also hold the other members accountable for their actions, which in turn also fosters supportive encouragement and motivation. With such a support network, members are able to establish friendly



competition in making their journey more successful for reaching their goals. As these dynamics form, members begin to utilize humor as a bonding and social capital tool to help them deal with the ups and downs of their problems. Finally members benefitting from these interactions include a face-to-face interaction component for extra support, mutual sharing, and motivation.

When examining the demographic data with regards to "who" participates in OSG's, Chou et al. (2009) reported that age, education, and several health related factors play a role in OSG participation. Individuals between the ages 25-44, with some college education, reported themselves to be less healthy, more distressed, and having a personal experience with the OSG topic three to five times more likely to use support groups. Bender, Jimenez-Marroquin and Jadad (2011) noted that none of the breast cancer support groups on Facebook that they examined were created by healthcare professionals or healthcare organizations. Of the breast cancer support groups on Facebook that they examined, only 49 percent were created to provide support. Ross, Orr, Sisic, Arsenault, Simmering, & Orr (2009) examined personality factors involved in the motivations associated with Facebook use and reported that individuals higher in motivation reported having memberships in more groups compared to individuals low in motivation. Also, Orr et al. (2009) found that individuals high in motivation checked their wall at least one time a day. Barak, Boneh and Dolev-Cohen (2010) reported that active OSG's, in terms of member's activity levels, were more successful and more actively and engaged participants provided more benefit to their members. Ballantine and Stephenson (2011) defined three types of OSG member categories: (1) passive recipients, (2) active supporters, and (3) casual browsers. Passive recipients were found to have high levels of emotional and informational support; however, their level of communication was also high, indicating that they were passive in their communication. Active supporters were the members who were in the group the longest, more likely to leave comments, and more likely to post on a regular basis in the OSG. Like passive recipients, the level of informational and emotional support was found to be high; however, the level of communication of active supporters was much lower, which is indicative of a high level of communicative activity. Finally, casual browsers had low

levels of informational and emotional support; however, their levels of communication were found to be high, which like passive recipients, have a passive level of communication (Ballantine & Stephenson, 2011).

Various studies have reported the reasons as to "why" people participate in OSG's. Houston (2002) indicated that people participated in OSG's because of the emotional support they are able to get and because participating alleviated their symptoms. Powell, McCarthy and Eysenbach (2003) suggested that people's OSG participation was based on obtaining more information about their condition, having the ability to discuss subject they felt uncomfortable discussing elsewhere, and not feeling isolated. Also, Alexander, Peterson and Hollingshead (2003) reported that OSG's served as an expressional outlet to provide help and understanding and was viewed as a place to turn when one felt alone. In addition, OSG participation was also reported to lead to a sense of relief and change in the person's life. In return, the opportunity provided through electronic communication allows people to do much more about their health issues and make decisions regarding the possible outcomes, which leads to the gaining of the feeling of empowerment (Haun, 2009). Mustafa, Short and Fan (2015) reported that in OSG'S the most common shared themes are personal experience with the issue, emotional support which on Facebook is provided with either a statement or the click of the "Like" button, and informational support where OSG participants frequently ask for information directly from the members. In a meta-analysis conducted by Barak et al. (2010) ten different empowering factors for engaging in OSG's were reported: (1) exchange of relevant information and knowledge, (2) acquiring psychological relief by writing, (3) providing and receiving emotional support, (4) experiencing universality, (5) accepting social recognition, (6) developing personal recognition, (7) helping others in need, (8) assistance in making decisions and taking consequent actions, (9) sharing personal experiences, and (10) experiencing amusement and fun.

When looking at the types of messages that are posted in OSG's two main groups (Finn, 1999) and a variety of message themes have been reported. In terms of the message groups, Finn (1999) indicated that both socio-emotional messages containing expressions of

feelings, provisions of support, casual conversation, universality, friendship, private group topics, as well as hostile statements and that task oriented messages comprised of information seeking, problem solving, group cohesion and basic computer talk. Greene et al. (2011) reported that in addition to problem sharing, messages posted to a diabetes OSG included pain centered management, interpersonal support and community formation, and marketing products where 27 percent of the postings reflected explicit product marketing and three percent of these posts included inappropriate and unsupported therapeutic claims of non-FDA approved products.

Griffiths, Calear and Banfield (2009) indicate that almost no evidence exists regarding the disadvantages of OSG participation. Eysenbach et al. (2004) reported no negative effects or harm from OSG participation; however, the exact influence of OSG's as a healthcare resource on health outcomes still remains unclear. In addition, Greene et al. (2011) found little evidence of malicious content or misleading informational posts that were supported by Facebook pages among the OSG users. When looking at OSG participation from healthcare provider perspective, according to Haun (2009) such information sharing via mediums of electronic communication does possess certain risks like the inability to secure medical data, issues regarding medical care standards, perceived and real costs involved with the health issue, and sharing of wrongful medical information (White & Dorman, 2001) for medical professionals who actively engage in participative communicatory practices with their patients. However, there are also some benefits associated as well. Using the opportunity to communicate with patients electronically via OSG's allows medical professionals to cut down on phone calls, unnecessary office visits, and reduce administrative tasks that are involved with classic medical practices (Haun, 2009). In addition to changing how standard office based medical practices are carried out, the use of social media in health care may also switch patient's locus of control in terms of "reaching out" to their healthcare professional where a more enhanced, enriched and in-depth doctor-patient relationship may be established due to the ability to freely and openly communication without any external restrictions such a limited appointment time in the office.

## ***OSG's and Health Issues***

The use of social media and new communication technologies are relatively new in healthcare. With an extensive continuum of health related information being available on the internet, this provides an extensive opportunity for health consumers to seek and search instant information rather than consult their physicians; however, although having an abundance of information may appear to be beneficial for health information seekers, the lack of regulation pertaining to the accuracy of this information is a serious concern (Avci & Avşar, 2014). It has been reported that with the use of new communication technologies in healthcare, providers and patients have the opportunity to connect more outside of the traditional doctor's office visit. It has been suggested that if nurses were to connect with their patients via e-mail, invites to Facebook groups, text messaging, etc., the quality of patient connection and support would greatly be influenced (Weaver, Lindsay, & Gittelman, 2012). Napolitano, Hayes, Bennett, Ives and Foster (2013) reported that by combining new communication technologies such as Facebook, text messaging, feedback, and emotionally connecting with a peer sharing a similar or same demeanor produced greater weight loss compared to just Facebook alone. This suggests that although Facebook alone may provide social support or fill emotional gaps, it may not be sufficient to produce any behavioral changes in the long run. In a sample of 1040 participants between the ages of 18 and 24, 80 percent reported sharing health information on social networks and 90 percent indicated that they trusted the health information that they found through their social networks (Price Waterhouse Coopers, 2012).

### ***Case Example: Bariatric Surgery Support Groups on Facebook***

Bariatric surgery is a medical procedure used to fight obesity. Among various bariatric surgery techniques like gastric bypass, route-en-Y, duodenal switch, and the gastric balloon, the most commonly utilized surgery technique today is the sleeve gastrectomy. During this procedure, 3/4 of the stomach is removed via laparoscopic surgery and a small

tube is stitched/stapled into the new stomach pocket. Upon removal of the majority of the stomach, the individual can no longer ingest similar amounts of food prior to the surgery and must pay attention to what they eat. Post-operative eating regulations are very strict and require close follow-up. After undergoing a sleeve gastrectomy, individuals not only change their eating habits but their overall food quantity is also reduced greatly and because the surgery is just a tool, the individual must change their entire life style and quality for the results to be successful (Çoşkun, 2015).

The following experience and description of the post-operation period was experienced firsthand by the author who underwent obesity surgery (sleeve gastrectomy) in 2012 and has lost a total of 65kg during this process. During the post-operative stage of having a sleeve gastrectomy, the obesity patient must learn to live according to new dietary rules and regulations as well as engage in exercise and follow strict medical stipulations. This is a very stressful period because the individual psychologically attempts to eat their meals according to old habits; however, this is almost impossible. Another stressful factor is that this procedure requires an immediate lifestyle change to occur. For example, during the first two weeks after surgery, the individual can only eat liquids and after having 2-3 tablespoons of soup or any liquid, the individual feels full and cannot eat anything else. If in the event the individual decides to eat something more solid or even more than the current capacity of what they can hold, the body generates an automatic vomiting reflex and whatever was ingested comes directly back out. This of course is a very uncomfortable situation and also extremely distasteful. Patients with no support system may have an extremely difficult time adapting to these new regulations and life style.

Currently on Facebook, there are thousands of weight loss support groups worldwide including Weight Watchers, Slim Fast, Atkins, and various bariatric surgery support groups. For this paper, the author searched her own personal Facebook groups that are currently active in Turkey and listed them with the number of members for each group. Bariatric surgery has been synonymously used with obesity surgery. Bariatric surgery support groups on the author's Facebook network can be found in Table 1.

**Table 1: Bariatric Surgery Support Groups on Facebook in Turkish**

<b>Facebook Group</b>	<b>Number of Members</b>
Gastric Bypass Turkey	910
Obezite Cerrahisi Kardeşliği ( <i>Obesity Surgery Brotherhood</i> )	1,715
Obezite Destek ( <i>Obesity Support</i> )	10,049
Obezite ve Metabolizma Cerrahisi Paylaşım Grubu ( <i>Obesity and Metabolic Surgery Share Group</i> )	21,509*
Marmara Pendik Araştırma Obezite Cerrahisi ( <i>Marmara Pendik Research Obesity Surgery</i> )	2,544
Obezite ile Mücadele Edenler ( <i>Those Fighting with Obesity</i> )	2,817
Obezite Cerrahisi Paylaşım Grubu ( <i>Obesity Surgery Share Group</i> )	9,278
Obez Yaşamak Kaderimiz Olmamalı ( <i>Living Obese Shouldn't be Your Destiny</i> )	295
Obezite Cerrahisi Candır Hayat Kurtarır ( <i>Obesity Surgery is Life, It Saves Lives</i> )	3,040
Obezite Cerrahisi Yardımlaşma / Bilgilendirme ( <i>Obesity Surgery Help / Information</i> )	2,914
Obezite ve Metabolik Cerrahi Anadolu Grubu ( <i>Obesity and Metabolic Surgery Anatolian Group</i> )	3,360
Obeziteden Estetiğe ( <i>From Obesity to Plastic Surgery</i> )	1,782
Post Bariatrik Estetik ( <i>Post Bariatric Plastic Surgery</i> )	3,277

F.Ü. Prof. Dr. Erhan Aygen Obezite Cerrahisi ( <i>F. U. Prof. Dr. Erhan Aygen Obesity Surgery</i> )	2,857
Doruk Obezite ( <i>Doruk Obesity</i> )	456
Obezite Cerrahisi Bilgilendirme & Yardımlaşma Platformu ( <i>Obesity Surgery Information &amp; Helping Platform</i> )	4,402
Obezite ile Savaşanlar ( <i>Those Fighting Obesity</i> )	574
Obezite Cerrahisinde Alternatif Tarifler ( <i>Alternative Recipes in Obesity Surgery</i> )	2,952
Obezite Kliniği ( <i>Obesity Clinic</i> )	4,578
Obezite Destek ( <i>Obesity Support</i> )	3,207
Obezite Kaderiniz Değil, Kıyafet Değişimi ( <i>Obesity isn't Your Destiny, we can change clothes</i> )	2,326
Obezite Merkezi ( <i>Obesity Center</i> )	1,597

\* *the most popular obesity facebook in the author's network*

According to the table above, there are a total of 86,439 members who benefit from the OSG's on Facebook. The most popular OSG on Facebook is the *Obesity and Metabolic Surgery Share Group* with over twenty-one thousand members. This and many other groups are managed by individuals who are obese, have undergone some form of obesity surgery, or are considering undergoing surgery. Of course, it must be noted that there are members who have memberships to different groups, which can create duplicate membership numbers. Below are some examples from the most popular Facebook Obesity Support Group, as mentioned above. Although the posts are in Turkish, the author will

translate the request from the posting member. Names and profile pictures have been removed to protect the posting member's identity.

Hello Friends,

I'm Ibrahim, I'm 25 years old. I am 140kg's and want to have a gastric bypass. I live on the Anatolian side in Istanbul. I work with state insurance. My financial situation isn't good. Which hospitals on the Anatolian side do gastric bypass surgeries. How do I apply. Which department do I have to go to and talk. Please, I am waiting for your help. If anyone knows, please give me some advice and help.

The above example clearly demonstrates information seeking from the support group as reported in Barak et al. (2010) and Greene et al. (2011).

Exactly 1 year ago I decided to have surgery and I'm so glad I did. Within this 1 year not only did I get my health back but also I experienced the most wonderful feeling in the world thanks to my son, I am not a mother. Within this year, the loss of 56 kg's and the arrival of this wonderful angel. Nobody should be afraid of this surgery.

The above post demonstrates a testimony, the need for social recognition and the goal of helping others make a decision (Barak et al., 2010; Hwang et al, 2010).

32 days post op. dinner is chicken chop cooked in its own steam, a tablespoon of fresh cheese and peppers sautéed and a tablespoon of yoghurt.



The above post is a demonstration of the need for accountability, exchange of relevant information, and the sharing of personal experiences (Barak et al., 2010; Hwang et al., 2010).

□

This time I hope to lose weight... I have started on a parsley diet. I wrap it around a burrito and eat it :))

This post demonstrates the need for social support (Barak et al., 2010) and a humorous approach to weight loss (Hwang et al., 2010).

The post below is a good example that demonstrates the need for psychological venting and need for support (Barak, 2010).

Some people exist just to demoralize. Ever since I had surgery people said everything to me because I was operated on with 85 kg's, my height 155 cm and BMI was 35 something. But I see that everyone is result oriented. Somebody else has very good results, their height is 170 some cm's, around 95 kg's and BMI around 31-32. No body asked this person WHY they had surgery (and they shouldn't, what's it to you?) But when they saw my 85 kg's they kept writing and writing. Thank you for the morale and motivation.

## ***Conclusion***

Considering that obesity is a global pandemic, the measured obesity rate in Turkey was reported to be at 22.3 percent (OECD, 2014); however, this rate is rising everywhere. Many people, including the author, search for various ways to become the *normal* person they once were. Dieting and exercising for many, results in a loss of 10-15 kg's in a certain period. After dieting has stopped, the weight loss is gained with extra weight and this constitutes an on-off vicious cycle. This trend of serial failures leads to despair, aggravation, sense of worthlessness, and many other negative emotions. If the individual's everyday social network is insufficient and not supporting of this process, the new alternative for support can be found in new communication technologies like social media or even programs associated with mobile technologies.

Within new communication technologies, social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, etc., people are able to create, search for and even participate in support groups to compensate for the missing support component they face in the real world. In addition, for some people, actively participating in OSG's may also help in the adherence to treatment in the long run. Virtual communities not only provide support but also provide information, common grounds, and a sense of belonging. As a result, the use of new communication technologies should be much more actively pursued and developed, especially in healthcare and health issues.

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*Nana Firdausi Mohammed*

## **How Facebook Facilitates Language Acquisition: A Case Study of International Students in Canadian Universities**

**Abstract:** International students in the Canadian community seek to improve their proficiencies in English Language and also to make new friends or associate from Canada and other countries. The latter is always difficult, probably because of the former, therefore help is bound to be needed by these foreigners to improve their language and one way could be to enable them to improve their English learning skills in Social Networking, one popular network is Facebook. This study therefore explores the benefits the user could derive from using Facebook and how these benefits could facilitate the learning of English as a second language. Despite their spectacular growth in both daily life and mainstream education, little research to date has been conducted concerning the use of social networking sites in foreign language learning. The aim of this study, therefore, is to examine the use of such sites to learn a foreign language. Using an auto-ethnographic approach that included self-aware participation, learner diaries and peer debriefing, the author investigated the social networking site Facebook to study English in the Canadian community. Specifically, the researcher focused her questions on aspects of socio-collaborative principles and practice. Results of a grounded, thematic analysis indicate that the site had number of counter-productive pedagogical impediments to language learning. The paper is concluded with suggestions for improved foreign language learning through social networking sites.

**Keywords:** Language Learning, Social Media, Facebook, Education

## ***Introduction***

It has become a necessity for technology to be introduced into the field of teaching mainly to aid language being taught and learnt. In some Canadian provinces, state authorities give high recognition and financial support for the incorporation of technology into learning activities. One program aimed at improving learning with technology is the Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) which is mostly used for those who study English as a second Language (ESL). A study conducted by Macaro, Handley and Walters (2012) revealed that technological aids helped to improve the language learning skills of teenage institutions in Canada between the years of 2000 to 2010. Recently, a new technology has been introduced which is the online learning system. One benefit of online learning is to reduce the costs that came with the traditional models of instruction. Certain classroom tuitions are becoming outdated and abandoned in most schools due to the fact that internet has provided easier modes of learning.

The North American Council for Online Learning (NACOL) estimated over a million students who took courses online in US in 2010 only (Wicks, 2010). The curriculum mode of instruction, assessment and course outlines for these online courses were all received by the students by internet. There were also forums made available for live interactions with other course mates and instructors online in certain states such as Alabama, Florida and Michigan have incorporated online learning experiences into their graduation requirements (Watson, Murin, Vashaw, Gemin & Rapp, 2010). Aside traditional cost reduction, online learning also has the benefits of creating interesting learning experiences for people who are not conversant within traditional learning models. It also provides an avenue where contents of instructions would be organized in well-designed patterns to facilitate easy learning. The last but not the least benefit is that more students and instructors get involved making the student-instructor ratio more parallel to enable smooth and easier consultations. The most common forum when it comes to online learning is social media or social networking.



## ***Social Media***

The ever increasing number of social media users has also sparked an increase in Online Foreign Language Learning through the same social media outlets (Warschauer & Grimes, 2007). Social media simply refers to a range of internet and mobile services that are capable of enabling its users to connect, have conversations, participate, join review and create online communities and online content and exchanges. The avenues include blogs, Wikipedia, social networking sites, media sharing sites and status updating sites (Fox, Zickur & Smith, 2009). Social networking sites include Facebook and LinkedIn which are the two most widely used social media platforms in Canada.

## ***Impact of social media usage on the Canadian Community***

It was estimated that the information and technology sector of Canada experienced a 3.8 percent annual growth between 2002 and 2011 due to the excessive use of social media and networks (OECD, 2007). There are also benefits for the Canadian Corporate Works because most businesses now employ the services of social media in their promotional or marketing activities. Social media also creates new ways and routines through which the government could engage with citizens and businesses. For example the Public Health Agency of Canada shares health information with the public concerning health issues. In the year 2000 there was a boost in the social media world when many networking sites were created therefore interaction around the globe also increased in terms of music, education, friendships, communication, movies and so on. Some popular social networking sites include Lunarstorm, LinkedIn, My Space and Facebook.

## ***Facebook***

The most widely used social network of this modern era is Facebook. Since its commercialization in 2004, the founder Mark Zuckerberg and his friends limited the

application to be used within the confines of Harvard University. Later, high school students were motivated to use the application. Being the most used network in 2009 and 2010 Facebook users are treated to different packages including photos, comments, album section, notifications and messages. Facebook as an application provides interfaces that are familiar to native language speakers that these students would be able to share photos and videos with ease. In this way, not only language would be learnt but other cultural materials could also be transferred from instructors to the students. Emotions are also exchanged through chat emoticons and inspirational videos further promoting connectivity between users (Wellman & Gullia, 1999). Facebook also has the benefit of providing multiple assessment of a learner's work by the instructor. In the traditional context, the instructor might not have the time to evaluate the learner's work more than once but Facebook provides a correspondence between the instructor and student where questions could be asked at different times especially in the learning of languages. The interface we spoke about earlier on provides different language patterns all over the globe and students or learners seem more interested in learning foreign language by using this interface. Most students who do not participate in classroom activities become more involved in activities on a social network such as Facebook where attributes such as shyness, being reserved do not really count. Facebook allows the user to establish his or her own identity.

The whole concept of social networking such as Facebook is to convince other users to accept your personality or identity which you create yourself (Goffman, 1959). People could be influenced in their perceptions about you and your world by looking at your nickname, your charts, photos, homepage to name a few. The identity of a Facebook user is not only limited to his/her personal profile but also the various groups he or she joins on the network. For example if a user joins a group such as "Keep Fit Online Club" or "Health wise Incorporated", the impression you give to others is that you are very concerned about your health and how to keep in shape. Another example is joining a group such as HEART Volunteers Group. This kind of group gives other users the impression that you cherish the lives of other people and you care about saving lives. The kind of contacts or friends you

keep also speaks a lot about your identity because they determine the type of comments that would be displayed on your Facebook wall (Donath & Boyd, 2004).

Another way in which Facebook provides social benefits is through relationships. Making new friends and associates is something that naturally comes along with every social networking platform including Facebook as well. The more you share information about yourself, the more you create a sort of intimacy with those you are sharing with because they might support, love or sympathize with your story to the extent of sharing theirs. Online relationships are fast becoming as strong as traditional relationships (real relationships). Most social networks serve as avenues of meeting future partners. Facebook also could be used to serve the same purpose too and can even serve as a way of reconnecting with long lost school mates or friends. Facebook could also be used to perform surveillance functions which could enable the users to keep track of all activities of the particular groups that they belong to (Lampe et al., 2006, p. 167). This keeping track of activities often makes many Facebook users to show less concern about their privacy (Gross & Acquisti, 2005). As of last year, a total of over 1 billion users were active every month. Out of this number of users it is highly possible for ESL learners to also become an active participant. If language learners are provided with an avenue where they can interact, it makes the learning process very easy and interesting because users would feel comfortable to produce outputs and receive inputs (Gass & Mackey, 2006). The point is that most ESL students in Canada prefer to interact with fellow Canadians, therefore, they miss the opportunity to improve the English speaking skills because they prefer speaking in French most of the time (Ranta & Meckelborg, 2013).

## ***Research Questions***

1. Is there any significant relationship between an individual's willingness to communicate and his or her Facebook usage?
2. What are the benefits of being a Facebook user?

3. How can Facebook facilitate the learning of language in the Canadian community?
4. How do students react to the effects of using Facebook for English grammar and writing discussion?
5. To which extent can Facebook help in regard to communication and interaction among students?

This research was limited to the use of Facebook for language learning, interaction and communication among international students in Canada. However occasional references would be made to cases in the United States and some other places to support different points in the latter part of this study.

### ***Linguistic benefits of interactions***

Many psychological analysts have assessed second language assessment on so many occasions and Plonsky and Gass (2011) concluded that most of the studies on interactive social media are conclusions from classroom investigations. The evidence gathered from their study showed differences in an interaction between two native language speakers, interaction between a native language speaker and an L2 learner and interaction between two L2 learners (Mackey & Goo, 2007). Another meta-analytical study concluded that EFL students often learned certain English verbs from the corresponding feedback of participants that they interacted with. These participants are native English speakers who try to speak simple English to foreigners but still end up chapping in one or two complex English vocabularies. Interactions also help students to obtain certain English concepts by connecting two or more English words from an English article (Sheen, 2007). Sheen also conducted another study using 99 ESL students with different L1 languages. The studies findings permitted Sheen to conclude that if a student is corrected in a meta linguistic way, they tend to perform better than those who do not receive any kind of corrections. The point

here is that there might be other effective means of giving feedback to the learner (Swain, 1995).

### ***Psychological benefit of interaction***

Naturally people would love to be integral parts of any network of relationship especially an interpersonal one (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). If it turns out that they are rejected by people then an ill feeling would be created. According to Baumeister & Leary (1995) the study they conducted concerning language learning proved that if people feel bonded with others, they always remain positive in social activities. Rejection could lead to depression, anxiety and ill thoughts, loss of motivation. Social relationships are essential for promoting the identity of individuals in any group in the society. It is also responsible for strengthening the self-esteem of individuals and prevents individuals from committing social vices that go contrary to the norms of the society. The case is not different for international students they also need social interactions to keep updated on issues concerning the new or foreign environment they find themselves in. These issues include language interaction, participation in social activities and exhibiting other lawful behaviors. The more international students interact with natives of the country they find themselves in, the more they feel socially accepted and appreciated. In a period of six months Bessiere, Kiesler, Kraut, and Boneva (2008) were able to ascertain facts that supported the notion that United States citizens who used internet to connect with loved ones back home, showed lower or no scores at all when they were tested for depression (Bessiere et al., 2008).

### ***Difficulties in interacting with native language speakers***

Second language speakers (L2) could be beneficial as explained before however the case could be very difficult for non-native English speakers especially international students in Canadian Universities. Most of the difficulties arise from the lack of opportunity to build

cordial relationships with the nationals. Ranta and Meckelborg (2013), in a duration of six months, measured the exposure of Chinese students to English in a Canadian University, they found out that these Chinese students spent only eleven minutes to communicate with native Canadian speakers to improve their English. Another set of findings by Kinginger (2011) also supported the idea that international students face many strong barriers in their bid to improve their language or establish personal relationships with native English speakers.

On the other hand, Heikinheimo and Schute (1986) used interviews to obtain data from 49 international students in a Canadian University. The results of the data showed that most of the students needed more time to read their materials when an assignment was announced. This was not because they were lazy but because they were not used to English as a language of instruction. Due to the fact that these students dedicated most of their time to read and prepare for tests, they spent less time interacting with people in the community. Another conclusion they drew from the study was that most of the foreign students could not sustain their interactive relationships with natives because they needed more knowledge of the English language to keep the relationship flowing.

### ***Lack of knowledge by the host***

Interaction difficulties do not only come from the foreigners' side but the host or native speakers also experience their own share of the difficulties. For example they might not be familiar with anything concerning the culture of the L2 students. Trice (2004) conducted a test to confirm this situation with 497 international students and found out that European students found it easier to relate or interact with Native Americans and Canadians rather than those from Asia and Africa. Another study conducted in Vancouver proved that irrespective of how hard Chinese students tried to make friends with native Canadians, they ended up having none. Here, a friend refers to a close person who they spent most of their time with. From the above explained studies and tests conducted, it is obvious that interaction involves certain standards which the two parties expect from each other.

Therefore, if those standards are not met, it becomes more difficult for the interactions to take place. Interaction involves nullifying all the differences between the two parties as well. Differences refer to qualities that could spark violent activities such as racial expressions, offensive signs and so on. Most of the time it is the foreign students (L2 learners) who find themselves on the receiving side (Yates, 2004). In all these situations explained above, one thing that remained private or personal to the foreign language learner is the decision to interact in the first place. The authority for that decision solely belongs to him or her only. Some foreign language learners are not very proficient in the language they want to learn but at least they are good in interacting with other people through their sense of humor. Others might have high proficiency in their L2 but less communicating or interactive skills. Therefore, interaction depends on the willingness of the foreigner to communicate. The Willingness to Communicate (WTC) is known to explain more deeply why and the extent to which foreign language learners are prepared to explore the world of natives in terms of communication, socialization and interaction (McCroskey & Richmond, 1990).

MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, and Noels (1998) developed a model that explained the concept of willingness of foreigners to communicate with natives when they want to learn a foreign language. This model consisted of six different levels of a pyramid, which represents six different concepts. From the bottom of the pyramid the first layer is social/individual context, then followed by affective-cognitive context, motivational propensities, situated antecedents, behavioral intentions and communicative behavior. The technicality about the layer is that one must achieve the first layer before moving in successions to the top.

From the explanations of the concepts before learning of second language even begins, one of the parties must exhibit his/her intentions to interact or communicate. The exhibition of the interactive behavior is then boosted by a personally generated confidence and the zeal to interact with a specific individual. The confidence comes along with certain emotions such as anxiety, joy and self-efficacy (MacIntyre et al., 1998).

## ***The computer mediated factor in language learning***

Computer mediated communication (CMC) is referred to as the process by which people create exchange and preserve information using networked telecommunication systems (December, 1996). The definition consists of strategies used in delivering information and the importance of interaction with mediation from computer. CMC has a variety of software for different functions such as *skype* for video conferencing, or e-mail for text communication. The benefits of online communication in language learning cannot be underestimated. Sauer, Seibel, & Rüttinger (2009) concluded from a study of 268 Japanese students in a Canadian University that most of the students only interacted with the internet when they came across a word that was too difficult to understand. In a related study of student's interaction through computers, Sauer et al. (2009) found out that more people used video enhanced chat software to express sign languages and other expressions instead of struggling to speak foreign language.

## ***Facebook usage in language learning interactions***

Facebook has different functions that make online communication very easy and all these functions include writing mode. In a Spanish community, the foreign language learners were specifically asked to join Facebook. The students were divided into different classes with different tasks concerning language learning. The studies brought evidences that the students enjoyed connecting with other people through Facebook and they developed certain norms concerning the interactions both in and out of the classes. The same type of study was conducted by Kabilan, Ahmad, and Abidin (2010) in a Malaysian tertiary institution and the reactions found were very positive. The survey was conducted concerning the use of Facebook by students in the Malaysian Universities. The reason for the study also included finding out the perceptions of the students concerning how Facebook could be a useful medium for learning language. Most of the students also confessed that Facebook provided them with four main benefits that made the learning of language very easy. These benefits included:



- Enabling them to practice the use of English
- Boost their self confidence
- Increase their motivation
- Improve their overall attitudes toward social networking

Hung and Yuen (2010) also conducted a study on the impact of Facebook in SNS courses in Taiwan. A survey conducted by Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe (2007) indicated that Facebook could actually be a tool for supporting life satisfaction. Ellison et al. (2007) also concluded that Facebook could actually reduce the barriers of communication and interaction because it provides different methods for the user to connect with the world. The data for this particular survey was based on 286 undergraduate students in an American University. There was also an element of social bonding according to the survey. Some students who had low self-esteem used Facebook to bridge their emotional gaps anytime they logged on. The test was only conducted in a single American University, therefore it is expected to vary among other institutions in the United States.

## ***Methodology***

The means of collecting data was a questionnaire which was posted to the e-mails of 50 international students in the University of Saskatchewan who were also members of the Canadian Students Association of Facebook. Participation was not voluntary therefore restrictions were imposed and the criteria were stated later in this section. The questionnaire was made up of 15 questions which were divided into three sections A, B and C. Each section contained 5 questions with section A dealing with the demographics of the respondents. Section B questions were geared towards the usage of Facebook by the respondents in terms of language while section C dealt with the language learning ability of the respondents.

## ***Participants***

The international students who took part in the study were categorized by nationality as follows:

**Table 1: *Nationality and Number of Students***

<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Number of students</b>
Native Canadians	10
Chinese	21
Cameroonians	6
Russians	2
Lithuanians	4
Germans	7
TOTAL	50

The questionnaires were sent or distributed on the 24th of July 2015 and consequently retrieved six days after distribution on 30th of July 2015. All questionnaires were retrieved and that represented 100% of the total distribution and all questions were completed to perfection by respondents. The sample size of 50 was chosen using purposive criterion sampling method because of the following reasons:

- a. The sample students were international students with English and their second language
- b. The students had used Facebook for more than six months
- c. The students' Facebook usage had been linked to a language learning activity in a way.

All of these above criteria needed to be satisfied by the respondent before being eligible. 22 (44%) of the respondents were males while 28 (56%) were females. The age range of the

respondents was from 19-28 years old. Respondents resided in and around the Saskatchewan province and most of them had been in the country for more than six months. 15 of the students were Master students with eight studying Nutrition and seven studying Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies. For the undergraduates, 19 studied English, eight of them studied Linguistics, four studied Accounting while three studied Modern Languages as a programme. The first language of the respondents were classified as follows:

**Table 2: *Nationality and First Language***

<b>Nationality</b>	<b>First Language</b>
Native Canadians	English
Chinese	Chinese
Russians	Russian
Lithuanians	Lithuanian
Germans	German

From the list above it was obvious that only Native Canadian students spoke English as their first language. The respondents were grouped into three classes according to their level of proficiency in English and the following results were obtained:

**Table 3: Proficiency Level in English**

Nationality	Proficiency Level in English		
	0 – 25%	26% - 75%	76% - 100%
Native Canadians	3	2	5
Chinese	18	2	1
Cameroonians	3	1	2
Russians	2	0	0
Lithuanians	2	2	0
Germans	2	2	3
TOTAL	30	9	11

From the above table 30 respondents out of 50 had 25 percent or less proficiency in English, nine respondents had from 26 percent to 75 percent proficiency level in English while 11 respondents had from 76 percent to 100 percent proficiency in English. The proficiency in English was measured with a 45 minutes English Grammar and speaking test organized in the same week as the questionnaire was distributed.

### ***Result of the study***

In terms of residence, 15 percent of the respondents had flatmates who spoke English (L1) while 28 percent did not live with L1 speakers. 57 percent lived with persons who spoke other languages which were not L1. Answers for research questions were compiled and collated in the following manner:

**Table 4: R1 – Relationship between Facebook usage and willingness of respondents to interact or communicate**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
Strongly disagree	2
Disagree	6
Indifferent	9
Agree	18
Strongly agree	15
TOTAL	50

From the above responses it could be seen that most of the respondents agreed that there was a significant relationship between their Facebook usage and their willingness to communicate.

**Table 5: R2 – Benefits of Facebook usage**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
Highly beneficial	22
Beneficial	12
Indifferent	8
Fairly beneficial	4
Non beneficial	4
TOTAL	50

From the above responses most of the respondents acknowledged Facebook usage as highly beneficial for the users.

**Table 6: R3 – Facebook’s facilitation of language learning in the Canadian Community**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>
Strongly facilitates	32
Facilitates	10
Indifferent	5
Fairly facilitates	2
Does not facilitate	1

The above results show that most of the students believed that Facebook strongly facilitates language learning in the Canadian Community.

**Table 7: R4 – Reactions to the effect of FB in Grammar Reading and Writing**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>
Very positive	41
Positive	5
Indifferent	2
Negative	1
Very negative	0
TOTAL	50

## ***Conclusion***

Over half of the population chosen in the Saskatchewan University had a sample of ESL students who used Facebook to study languages. Most of these students created their profiles in English language and most of the activities they performed on the network were written in English language. The study also concluded that the actual interactions between users and their friends on Facebook were in English even though most of their friends responded in their first languages. One thing most of the respondents did not agree to was that Facebook helped them to establish Canadian friends. They were able to establish relationships with friends from countries other than Canada.

An analysis also showed an insignificant relationship between Facebook use and meeting of new natives. From this study, the author concludes that language learners use Facebook to connect to English speaking users but the only problem is when they try to establish personal relationships it becomes difficult because of their low proficiency. The study has also shown that Facebook might provide different kind of benefits for users who patronize the network and its numerous packages. Therefore, in a nutshell, what can be concluded from the study is that Facebook is an essential tool which facilitates language learning among international students in the Canadian community.

From the results, Facebook, as a means for language learning, effectively enhanced the writing abilities of the EFL students. The students had a higher mean score in the post-test. Facebook also built positive attitudes of students in language learning. Grammar discussions seemed to lead to the English writing improvement. The students' grammatical and writing competence was enhanced after the four-month period when they were given opportunities to use Facebook for discussions. The findings of the present and previous studies clarify the efficiency of Facebook as a means for language learning. In the present study, the mentioned positive effects resulted from the opportunities to have grammar and writing discussions on Facebook. The present study found that most of the students had discussions about sentence structure on Facebook, and this is possibly one of the reasons that helped them improve their writing competence.





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*Nalan Linda Fraim*

## **Representations of Euthanasia in the Media: An Analysis of International Media, Local Media, and Internet Blogs**

***Abstract:*** This article aims to cover Euthanasia and its presence on the internet. The notion of professional clinics developed aid their clients in what is termed assisted suicide or mercy killings. Ethical issues such as whether this service should be extended to children who suffer terminal illnesses and its portrayal in the media is addressed in both local and major sources.

***Keywords:*** Euthanasia, Internet, Media, Ethics

### ***Introduction***

Euthanasia, which is known among the general public as physician assisted suicide or mercy killings, has been a controversial topic for centuries. Euthanasia has been defined as *"the act or practice of killing or permitting the death of hopelessly sick or injured individuals (as persons or domestic animals) in a relatively painless way for reasons of mercy"* (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2014). The idea of helping people to kill themselves, regardless of the reason, has also been a hot topic with regards to morality and ethics too. Individual perceptions, religious beliefs, societal practices, and contextual situations have all played a role in the development of public opinion and personal decisions to either support or not support the practice of euthanasia.

While many countries established laws supporting the practice of euthanasia, other countries prohibit the practice of euthanasia and consider it to be a criminal act. For example, euthanasia in Holland has been a legal practice since 2001; however, in 2010, the Scottish Parliament rejected the End of Life Assistance Bill, which suggested the legalization of euthanasia. In countries where euthanasia is practiced legally, mainly the adult population is seen as the primary consumer. There are some exceptions to this where euthanasia practices are extended to children as well. For example in the Netherlands, only with parental consent, children over the age of 12 can request to be euthanized. Recently in February 2014, Belgium passed a law that legalized the practice of euthanasia for children under the age of 12.

Currently the only legal euthanasia clinic in the world is *Dignitas*, which is located in Switzerland. Euthanasia has been legal in Switzerland since 1940 and Dignitas was established in 1998. Dignitas requires that members pay a one-time joining fee of approximately \$ 240 and a minimum of \$ 95 annual membership fee. The average cost for an all-inclusive euthanasia service at Dignitas is around \$ 32,000. The Dignitas website was last updated on May 21, 2014 and up to today 2.931.070 people, including the author for research purposes, have visited the website. In addition to Dignitas, there are no other known euthanasia clinics worldwide, which makes Dignitas unique within its own concept; however, there are many non-profit organizations that help people in their choice and

journey with assisted suicide throughout the world such as Exit International, based in Australia, and Compassion & Choices, based in the USA.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze and examine the media reports concerning how euthanasia is represented worldwide. Although euthanasia is a very sensitive topic, much attention is drawn to the issue primarily only when a case is delivered to the media. Media coverage on euthanasia throughout the world from major media sources, local media sources, and blogs will be analyzed and "how" euthanasia is reported via these news outlets will be examined in detail.

## ***Major Media Sources***

### *Bloomberg*

The article on the Bloomberg website is dated February 14, 2014. In general, the article initially provides the reader with basic information regarding the bill, how it was developed, how many votes were used to make it pass, and what needs to happen for it to become a law. The second part of the article focuses on professional opinions about the issue being discussed in parliament. A common point reflected in the articles is that the decision to allow euthanasia to be applied to children under the age of 12 is more of a political decision rather than a "humane" decision that aims to benefit the child or reduce their suffering due to the terminal illness they have. Another interesting point made in the article is regarding the "number" of possible euthanasia cases that will actually take place in the next decade being relatively small and therefore minimizes the issue in terms of relevance with reference to its application.

### *LA Times*

This article is dated February 20, 2014. Although the article appears to provide general information about the process of euthanasia in Europe, it seems to be more of a comparative opinion article where euthanasia practices in the United States are being compared with those of Europe. The article also suggests that although the desire to engage in end of life practices appear to be high, recent pharmacy statistics indicate that this number isn't as high as it is assumed to be – 122 patients had prescriptions for life-ending medication; however, only 71 took them.

### *The Guardian*

The article titled “Euthanasia for children is hard to contemplate – but we must talk about it” is dated February 17, 2014. The author of the article takes a personal and opinionated approach when talking about the issue. In a sense it appears that the author is looking at both sides of the story and playing the devil's advocate. At the end of the article, the author indicates specifically that he is a doctor, which in this case would grant him the authority or qualify him to write and state his so called professional opinion regarding the issue. The article provides an overview of the issue on euthanasia; however, the article appears to be more of a short academic essay rather than an article reporting the news. In the article, the author makes comparisons between Belgian Law and British Law and questions how valid and appropriate the euthanasia law really is. An interesting aspect in the article is that the author questions the ethics of the practice and asks two questions: (1) do we take away all hope when we tell a child they can die if they want to, albeit peacefully and (2) will it cause more harm to give people a choice, even when that choice is very difficult to make?



### *Reuters*

The article is dated February 14, 2014. The article initially talks about the passing of the law but then turns to the international responses made to Belgium. An interesting aspect of this news report was that Belgium couldn't make any sense of the international opposition received. It appears that Belgium was expecting more support from the international community. The report also includes a counter comment from the chief editor of De Standaard, which is one of the largest newspapers in Belgium. In this comment the chief editor states his aggravation with the criticism received and argues that they are not "killing" children but rather providing an alternative to relieve their suffering. Also, the chief editor tries to explain that they as a country see death at an entirely different level and insinuates that if a person is not at the same level, it is not possible for them to understand why Belgium passed the law.

### *LA Times*

The article titled "Belgium's humane stance on dying kids" is dated February 20, 2014 and takes a comparative approach. On one hand the article presents the overall support for the law and on the other hand it also presents the opposition from various perspectives in addition to comparing similar practices carried out in Europe. A "fair" aspect of the article is that it also provides the current situation in the USA for readers to create a comparative scale on the issue.

## ***Local Media Sources***

In terms of finding local media sources reporting on the issue, unfortunately this was much more difficult than anticipated. The local media sources tend to have more reports on euthanasia practices elsewhere rather than focus on the Belgian Parliament's decision. This can be viewed from two perspectives: (1) the local media does not care what happens in other countries, especially with the issue of euthanasia because the issue is not relevant to the country and (2) broadcasting policy does not allow extensive coverage on touchy issues in other countries and is more focused on local issues and happenings.

### ***The Irish Times***

The news report in the Irish Times mainly focused on what the law is, how it passed, how many support the law, and the overall positive perspective in general. At first, although it appears as if the news report was done in a fairly neutral manner, it is interesting to see that only a couple of lines regarding existing oppositions were shared. This raises the question of true neutrality, or in respective, are the Irish more likely to support this practice in general? Also in the report, there are no comparative reflections that portray the stance towards euthanasia in Ireland. It does appear to be a single sided news report.

### ***NBC News***

The article titled "Belgium becomes the first country to allow euthanasia for dying children" was published on February 13, 2014. The article is very brief and informative only. No support or opposition is reported. The article was generated from Reuters and is very plain, neutral with only a picture of the Belgian Parliament building.

## ***Internet Blogs***

For this section, various internet blogs have been analyzed. The purpose of this section is to portray the bloggers' perspectives on euthanasia applied to children. A total of 4 blogs will be analyzed and their perspectives on the issue will be discussed.

### *Patheos.com - Get Religion*

The Patheos.com blog is a religious based blog authored by religion journalist Terry Mattingly. The blog entry is dated June 13, 2013. Mattingly believes that the news reports he has read do not constitute the quality of material for their blog; however, he does present the issues as a more political aspect rather than legal or ethical one. In the blog, Mattingly discusses how the issue was reported in Belgium's local newspapers De Morgen and the French daily in Belgium Le Soir. Mattingly notes once again that the issue is more political and not religious or ethical; however, with Belgium granting children under the age of 12 the license to kill themselves, Mattingly sets forth the local oppositions on this issue as there appear to be more important issues that have been overlooked in general. Mattingly warns his readers to be cautious about advocacy journalism, which is how he sees these two reports. Mattingly maintains a pretty neutral stance and does not include his personal opinions on the issue despite the fact that he writes for a religious blog.

### *Scope*

*Scope* is a blog site that acts as an advocacy for disability in general. The blog entry was authored by Richard Hawke, titled "Belgium vote to legalize euthanasia for terminally ill children" and is dated February 14, 2014. Hawke takes an entirely different perspective on the Belgium Parliament's decision. Hawke discusses the possibility of extending the practice of euthanasia to the disabled population, where suicide rates apparently appear to

be high. This is adding a different perspective to the euthanasia debate in addition to the existing oppositions from the medical and religious communities.

#### *The Catholic Herald*

The blog entry titled "Why Belgium's vote for child euthanasia should horrify us all" was authored by Madeline Teahan dated February 13, 2014. Teahan, in her blog, suggests that there is an underlying alternative motive for the Belgian Parliament to pass this law and that it is not to ease the suffering of the terminally ill. Rather, the ultimate goal is to rob children from their opportunity of having the chance to live and experience their childhood. One can look at this approach as a conspiracy theory; however, it does not add up in terms of logic. You have a child who is terminally ill, who cannot run, hop, skip, and jump, and is possibly bed-ridden due to extensive treatments. How can one expect this particular child to "live" the defined childhood that Teahan is talking about? Although this particular blog seems contradicting in terms of what's being said and the existing reality, it appears to be more of an opinionated blog that is in support with Catholic values.

#### *Liberty Voice*

The blog entry is titled "Euthanasia Already out of Control in Belgium" and authored by Kollin Lore. The entry is dated February 13, 2014. Lore suggests that the euthanasia practices in Belgium are out of control despite the fact that they are under physician control and now with the passing of this new law, the practice will get out of hand and become hard to control. Lore cites a study conducted by the Canadian Medical Association Journal which reported both reported and unreported euthanasia statistics. Based on these statistics, while less than 32 percent of the cases were reported, approximately 47 percent of the cases were unreported. This raises the questions of how regulated the current euthanasia cases in the country are. Again, the concern that Lore raises is that if 47 percent of the cases can go unreported, then this number is likely to increase now that the law allows children under the

age of 12 to request to be euthanized. Lore takes an objective standpoint in the reporting of the issue; however, despite this entry being a blog, it is fairly neutral and informative and raises questions for the readers to consider regarding the practice of euthanasia.

## ***Conclusion***

Overall, when examining the major and local media sources in addition to the internet blogs, a very important point has come to attention – the ethics of the practice is never mentioned. The same goes for the legality, the process, the backlashes to the decision, and the possible consequences that society should expect. Nobody talks about or even mentions morality, values, effects, etc. Some sources do warn about the possible consequences in terms of the law possibly increasing the suicide rates but other than that in general the reports are fairly neutral or supportive of one side of the argument. Another interesting aspect that warrants attention is that although the Belgian Parliament's decision to extend the practice of euthanasia to children under the age of 12, when searching the majority of the news sources for the term "euthanasia" the results that come up are either "pet euthanasia" or "adult euthanasia". This may be due to the fact that child euthanasia is only legal in the Belgium (children under 12 years of age), the Netherlands and Luxembourg (children age 12 and above). One would expect bloggers at least to state their personal opinions regarding whether or not it is "ethically" or "morally" right or wrong for a child to ask to be euthanized. Expecting to find more opinionated articles/news reports regarding the issue, the researcher had to realize that euthanasia within itself is a sensitive topic but isn't as "hot" as a politician's sex scandal or a movie star's paparazzi catch though.



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## **Smartphones and Symptoms of Behavioral Addiction**

***Abstract:*** This article endeavors to address the characteristics of the smartphone, with its features and functional conveniences, and look into addiction and certain behavioral patterns encouraged by the constant usage of this technological device.

***Keywords:*** Smart phones, Internet, Addiction, Behavioral, Communication

## ***Introduction***

Throughout the developing world, the advancements in technology of communication systems have greatly expanded. In today's world, smart phones can probably be accepted as one of the greatest technology advancements with the favor of its multi-functional usage opportunities. In earlier times, mobile phones were simply being used for making calls and sending GSM messages. However, along with the advancements in communication technologies, internet access has been also provided by SIM card operators, which simultaneously started to expand this new technology of communication. Availability of internet access on mobile phones has brought along many other alternative programs and applications for people. Nowadays, it wouldn't be wrong to say that, we are able to use smart phones almost in place of everything; as note books, calendars, cameras, alarm clocks, calculators, remote controllers, to name a few.

Given the popularity and usage of smart phones, many people spend great amounts of time on using smartphones or somehow getting distracted by them; consequently avoiding healthy "real-time" attendance or interpersonal contact. Therefore, along with handiness and powerful capabilities, potentially problematic aspects of smartphones must not be avoided. Accordingly, recent increase of studies on technological addiction and smartphone addiction indicates the importance of this troublesome situation of users being addicted to their smartphones.

As stated above, smart phones are offering numerous applications and multi-functional usage options. However, many people are in danger of being addicted to smart phones to a certain extent, which may result in lack of real time attendance and/or interpersonal contact.

The major aim of this study is to expose the dimensions of addiction to smartphones and additionally, uncover the most frequently used applications that may be related with the possible reasons for this addiction.

Through examining the symptoms of smartphone addiction and mostly used applications, it is expected to discover individuals' levels of addiction to their smartphones and the associated applications with the revealed addiction.

In the last few years, use of mobile phone has increased. According to statistics, 70 percent of the world's population has at least one mobile phone. Additionally, research results in the United States show that, 85 percent of children have mobile phone. However, only 73 percent of these children own books (Osman, Zawawi, Zainal, Shiang-Yen & Alwi, 2012). Furthermore, based on the statistics, world-wide smartphone users are expected to reach the number of 2 billion by the year of 2016 (eMarketer, 2014).

### ***Characteristics of Smartphones***

Currently, due to their highly advanced operating systems, remarkable amount of mobile phones are called 'smartphone'. Compared to old fashion ordinary mobile phones, smartphones offer their users numerous capabilities and applications unlike the standard mobile phones (Osman et al., 2012). Smartphones are extremely popular devices which are commonly used by most people on account of its affordability, size, and functions (McLuhan, 1964).

Smartphones offer outstanding features like size, screen size, applications, ubiquity, and flexibility in time as well as in capacity (Nielsen & Fjuk, 2010). Due to these characteristics, people who use smartphones can access internet to buy goods, to share or exploit media theme whenever and wherever they want (Okazaki & Hirose, 2009). The smartphone has expanded several users' lives; on account of its size and advanced features, it is carried around 24/7. Its varied applications encourage the use of 24/7 smartphones and the requirement of being connected to internet (Okazaki & Hirose, 2009). Smartphone applications are convenient in various terms, such as mobile internet, camera, telephone connection and agenda in addition to several more downloadable applications.

## ***Addiction***

Addiction is a condition concerning alcohol or drugs abuse which occurs from the addictive impact that these substances have on the body and brain. Nevertheless, besides constant use of drugs or alcohol, people can also become addicted to certain behavioral patterns (APA, 2001). When the satisfaction generated by a substance or action is high, people become more addicted to that certain substance or action (Carbonell, Oberst & Beranuy, 2013).

Today, the term addiction is not only associated with drugs or substances; equally, it is related with gambling, games, internet or even smartphones and categorized as behavioral addictions (Kwon, Kim, Cho & Yang, 2013). Accordingly, *Technological addictions are also defined as behavioral addictions, where interactive components of computer devices can have inducing and reinforcing features that may promote addictive tendencies (e.g., tolerance, withdrawal, interference, and relapse)* (Lee et al., 2014, p. 2).

On the other hand, even though there is scientific and clinical evidence on technological addictions, conversely there is still shortage of agreement on the presence of it. One way or another, behavioral addictions are officially accepted and further research on technological addictions has been urged by the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, Fifth Edition (DSM-5), released by the American Psychiatric Association (Lee et al., 2014).

Furthermore, some internet programs like chatting, gaming and pornography have been reported to exhibit identical stages of addiction with drug and substance abuse (Kwon et al., 2013). In view of that, *(w)ith most addictive behaviors, dopamine release is responsible for the reward and pleasurable feeling of behavior* (Everitt & Robbin, 2005, p. 9). Delightful emotion is delivered by the *Process* in behavioral addiction. During this process, dopamine and endorphin are set free. Even though the prize does not exist, dopamine is still set free due to the expectation of the reward. For this reason, gambling and social media are ABLE to cause addiction (Everitt & Robbin, 2005).

## ***Smartphone Addiction***

Numerous people cannot imagine a life without a smartphone; somehow this causes users to become dependent on their smartphones (Haverlag, 2013). Therefore, due to its approachability at any time, smartphones are used extensively. However, extreme use of smartphones is capable of generating addictive behavior (Young, 1999).

Since the attributes are alike, online mobile or smartphone addiction has intimate relation with internet dependency (Kwon, Kim, Choi, Gu, Hahn & Min, 2013). Internet dependency mainly starts with habitual actions like checking; digital addictions frequently appear from the consequence of using habits in order to comfort pain or to get away from the truth (Huisman, Garretsen, & van den Eijnden, 2000). Accordingly, there is often an unwanted circumstance with specific habits, which turn into being troublesome like *playing games, visiting social media or forums. Some characteristics such as; stress, loneliness or isolation, could play a role as well* (Young, 1999, p. 10).

Smartphone users do not frequently switch off their phones or do not leave home without taking their phones; in addition, they use them for work, comfort, and social events. In comparison with the fixed phone and yet with people's desktop or laptop computer, the connection among users and their smartphone is far more developed than imagined (Carbonell, Oberst & Beranuy, 2013). Since adolescents spend more time with and using their smartphones, this is especially accurate for them. Besides, they are more responsive toward prizes and cues when compared to elder people (Haverlag, 2013).

The dissimilarity among internet and smartphone addiction, is grounded on similar usage satisfactions and usage situation (Carbonell, Oberst, & Beranuy, 2013; Ghose, Goldfarb, & Han, 2010), satisfactions of a substance or behavior form the dependency (Carbonell, Oberst, & Beranuy, 2013). Smartphones possess noticeable gratifications or characteristics which can form a powerful positive reinforcement (delightful experience) for people who use it.

## ***Potential Gratifications Causing Smartphone Addiction***

Carbonell, Oberst, and Beranuy (2013), gathered distinctive gratifications of smartphones which (can) lead to positive reinforcement by people who use it:

Euphoria: Receiving text messages, calls, or social media reply generates an emotion of being estimable or loved.

Instrumental functions: Instrumental functions and other characteristics can all be in use of the owners' necessities. Smartphones operate like a radio, music player, navigation, clock, camera, recorder, as well as a diary and agenda.

Identity and status symbol: Besides functional features smartphones also operates like its owner's identity symbol, which is formed not just by the smartphone itself, but also by the number of calls, messages and notifications the user receives. It enables usage in public sites to display the user's identity and forms an emotional captivity with the person who uses it.

(Online) Social network: Smartphones are able to form and preserve social networks, which are dissimilar from those formed by face to face physical-social networks are developing and quickly changing by the use of smartphones. Adolescents are especially likely to create and sustain social networks with their smartphones .

Dependency: Because of the identity and social network containments of smartphones, people easily get dependent on their phones. Being connected 24/7 with their social networks forms an emotional belongingness (they have a smartphone, so I need a smartphone, as well).

Connection worldwide: Smartphones give the possibility of easilly connecting with the internet; so, it is feasible for users to join globally with people, friends and peers; borders no more exist. Therefore, communication is most enabled through smartphones, when face-to-face communication cannot be done.

Feeling of control: Lately, people tend to not go out without their smartphones. Users feel safe as well as in control, on account of having access to other contacts provided by smartphones; with the absence of a smartphone, fear can come forth by virtue of not being connected.

Permanent Mobility: Since numerous people all the time have their smartphones at hand and turned on, it is anticipated other users are permanently connected, also reachable too. Therefore, when response is not given on time by users, a feeling of interest arouses. In this manner, use of smartphone along with bonding is being enhanced.

Entertainment: Due to a lot of applications being obtainable on smartphones, the phone can operate like an online mobile game device. In addition, it is possible to browse and consume multimedia gratifications and shop with the online operations that smartphones present.

Expression of feelings: Users are able to put into words or share feelings, experiences, and occurrences in texts, videos, and pictures, owing to the characteristics of smartphones such as; communication applications, and social media as well as calling and text messaging. (Carbonell, Oberst, and Beranuy, 2013).

As a result, addiction does not appear at once. However, it is possible to expand through habits by time, in which those habits can prevent individuals being in harmony and make them maladaptive (i.e. function as an escape) and therefore cause intensification of an addiction. *Smartphone addiction is a behavioral addiction that negatively interferes with a person's life.* (Young, 1999; Huisman et al., 2000; Shaffer, 1996, p.11). Smartphone addiction behavior is able to draw high amount of attention on the phone or on a certain implementation such as, posting and controlling, or *interacting on social media platforms. If the smartphone or application will be removed from the addicted person, panic attacks or feelings of discomfort emerge.* (Young, 1999; Huisman et al., 2000; Shaffer, 1996, p. 11).

## ***Uses and Gratifications Theory***

Within this study, it is appropriate to take Uses and Gratifications Theory into consideration in account of strong gratifications derived from smartphone use, since recent studies revealed gratifications associated with mobile phone and smartphone usage.

A lot of positive emotions are related to the use of smartphones; it forms a feeling of closeness with family and friends, belongingness, keeping up with far distant relationships, as well as unceasing presence (Nurullah, 2009). In his research on *Uses and Gratifications of Mobile Phone Use among Students in Turkey*, Hoştut (2010) discovered that, the most outstanding pleasures are *sociability, reassurance and relaxation; the appearances of status, fashion and innovation gratifications are strong motivations* (Hoştut, 2010, p. 24). The main satisfactions that people get from using mobile phones are; ease of use, improvement in connection, instant accessibility and availability, and being convenient (Zhen, Honglei and Sen, 2012).

## ***Method***

The purpose of this study is to examine the tendency to smartphone addiction in T.R.N.C (Kyrenia), by analyzing the symptoms of addiction associated with smartphone usage. The data will be collected by using six close ended (Likert type) and five open ended questions among 48 randomly selected participants. All Likert type questions (1 to 6) are designed to measure the symptoms of smartphone addiction. Additionally, in order to increase the accuracy of collected data about the symptoms of smartphone addiction, question 7 and 8 have been designed to measure the symptoms via using open ended questions. Accordingly, questions from 9 to 11 are prepared to reveal the applications associated with addicted participants. Respondents completed the surveys approximately within five to ten minutes after receiving them and turned them in. The used survey is a modification of the questionnaire *The Smartphone Addiction Scale: Development and Validation of a Short Version for Adolescents* (Known et al., 2013).



## ***Signs and Symptoms of Behavioral Addiction***

Behavioral addictions can be seen through many symptoms and signs, as in substance addiction. There are specific determinative signs of behavioral addictions which require treatment when one or more are observed in individuals such as; involving in the behavior longer than intended or rising the period or engagement of concerned behavior. Need of continuous involvement in the behavior. Failure of attempt to end, lessen or manage the behavior. Spend most of the time involving in the behavior, organizing to involve in the behavior or rescuing from the effects. Become obsessive with the behavior or with the necessary preparations for it. Disregard duties like work, school or family in order to involve in the behavior more often. Self-isolation from friends and family in order to involve easier in the behavior without letting them know. Despite negative results constantly involving in the behavior. Increase the time involved or intensity of the behavior due to attain the equal effect. When it is not possible to involve in the behavior feeling uncomfortable, nervous, enmity or anxiety (Project Know, 2015).

## ***Data Analysis***

The examination of collected data among randomly selected 48 participants consisting of 33 females and 15 males on smartphone addiction will be discussed below. The questionnaire consisted of ten questions, six Likert type and four open ended. Statistical tests and percentages of the sample population will be discussed within this chapter.

**Table 1: *Gender Details of Participants***

<b><i>Gender</i></b>		<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
Valid	Male	15	31.25
	Female	33	68.75
	Total	48	100.0

Table 1 indicates the gender distribution of the participants. 15 out of 48 participants are male (31.25%), whereas 33 are female (68.75%). The profile shows an unbalanced distribution of gender in the study population.

## ***Analysis of Likert Type Questions***

Questions from 1 to 6 are Likert type questions, analyzing the symptoms of smartphone addiction. According to the statistical analysis of the results means are as stated below.

**Table 2: General Means of Likert Type Questions**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Mean</b>
All participants	2.96
Male participants	3.10
Female participants	2.90

Table 2 above presenting the means indicates that, in overall analysis more than half of the participants are showing respectable amount of addiction symptoms on using their smartphone. Furthermore, it is observed that addictive symptoms are more detected on female participants compared to male participants.

## ***General Means of Each Likert Type Question***

Table 3 represents the general means of each Likert type question along with the means of male and female participants in association with questions one to six 1 to 6.

**Table 3: Female and Male Means of Each Likert Type Question**

<b>Question Number</b>	<b>Gender</b>		<b>General Mean of Both Genders</b>
	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	
Question 1	2.72	3.13	2.85
Question 2	3.42	3.86	3.56
Question 3	2.63	2.53	2.60
Question 4	3.51	3.80	3.60
Question 5	2.66	2.60	2.64
Question 6	2.45	2.66	2.52

The analysis of gender differences among answers of Likert type questions, measuring the addiction symptoms are as shown above. These results indicate that, in association with gender differences Question 2 has the greatest difference, followed by Question 1, then Question 4, and Question 6. However, Question 3 and Question 5 does not have a significant difference associated with gender differences. In Questions 2, 1, 4 and 6 showing the highest difference in comparison among genders, it can be seen that female participants display higher symptoms of smartphone addiction. As mentioned above, the answers of Question 3 and 5 by both genders are nearly the same. The slight difference associated with genders reveals that, the male participants show higher symptoms of addiction in Question 3 and 5.

**Table 4: Question 1: Experiencing difficulty on focusing on a task due to smartphone use.**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>No. of Responses</b>			<b>Percentage %</b>		
	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13.33</b>	<b>6.07</b>	<b>8.33</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>13.33</b>	<b>45.45</b>	<b>35.42</b>
<b>Not sure</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>20.00</b>	<b>21.21</b>	<b>20.83</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>53.33</b>	<b>24.24</b>	<b>33.33</b>
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>3.03</b>	<b>2.08</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>99.99</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>99.99</b>

In Table 4, from the responses given to Question 1, it can be seen that female participants are having more difficulty on focusing on a task, than male participants due to smartphone use. The results display that 45.45 percent of female participants agreed with having difficulty on focusing due to smartphone usage. However, 53.33 percent of male participants disagreed to the fact of having difficulty on focusing. Accordingly, this may indicate that female participants pay more attention to their smartphone, while they are trying to focus on a task. Due to the number of responses among female and male participant's given as strongly agree, not sure and strongly disagree, no significant difference is observed. Nevertheless, this may also be associated with the unbalanced participation of male and female respondents.

**Table 5: Question 2: Feeling pain in the wrists or at the back of the neck while using a smartphone.**

Responses	No. of Responses			Percentage %		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3.03</b>	<b>2.08</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>13.33</b>	<b>21.21</b>	<b>18.75</b>
<b>Nor sure</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>13.33</b>	<b>18.18</b>	<b>16.66</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>46.67</b>	<b>45.45</b>	<b>45.83</b>
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>26.67</b>	<b>12.12</b>	<b>16.66</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>99.99</b>	<b>99.98</b>

According to Table 5, percentage of ‘neutral’ and ‘disagree’ responses given to Question 2, by both female and male participants were close. In addition, it has been observed that the highest rated answer to Question 2 was ‘disagree’ by both genders (males 46.67 percent, females 45.45 percent). The percentage of ‘strongly disagree’ responses given by male participants (26.67%) were higher than female ones (12.12%), whereas the percentage of ‘agree’ responses collected by male participants (13.33%), was below the female ones (21.21%). Therefore, this may indicate that in relation to males, females are experiencing more negative effects on their health due to smartphone use. On the other hand, when the percentages of total responses to Question 2 are observed, it can be seen that, most of the participants disagreed with feeling pain while using a smartphone. Moreover, in association with general analysis results of highly addicted and addicted respondents, there was no significant link to this symptom.

**Table 6: Question 3: Won't be able to stand not having a smartphone.**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>No. of Responses</b>			<b>Percentage %</b>		
	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>26.67</b>	<b>27.27</b>	<b>27.08</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>26.67</b>	<b>24.24</b>	<b>25.00</b>
<b>Not sure</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>26.67</b>	<b>12.12</b>	<b>16.66</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>6.67</b>	<b>30.30</b>	<b>22.92</b>
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13.33</b>	<b>6.07</b>	<b>8.33</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100.01</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>99.99</b>

Table 6 demonstrates that, the general percentages of ‘confirming’ responses retrieved from both genders are remarkably higher in comparison to ‘refusing’ responses. When the total percentage of responses are analyzed, it can be seen that, the sum of the ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’ responses are 52.08 percent, while the sum of the percentage of ‘strongly disagree’ and ‘disagree’ responses make up 31.25 percent. Accordingly, taking the answers of addicted participants into consideration, it has been observed that, there is a high association between smartphone addiction and not being able to stand the withdrawal from a smartphone. In other words, according to the statistical results, positive responses given to Question 3 are positively correlated with the participants who have been identified as being highly addicted and addicted to their smartphones.

**Table 7: Question 4: Feeling impatient and fretful when I am not holding my smartphone.**

Responses	No. of Responses			Percentage %		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3.03</b>	<b>2.08</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>13.33</b>	<b>12.12</b>	<b>18.75</b>
<b>Not sure</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13.33</b>	<b>30.30</b>	<b>16.66</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>53.33</b>	<b>39.39</b>	<b>45.83</b>
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>20.00</b>	<b>15.15</b>	<b>16.66</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>99.99</b>	<b>99.99</b>	<b>99.98</b>

It can be comprehended from Table 7 that, 62.43 percent of the participants from both gender groups chose ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’ responses. When the gender groups are observed separately, the percentage of responses given by female participants to disagree and strongly disagree is 54.54 percent. On the other hand, the general disagree responses of male participants represent 73.33 percent, which is almost three quarters out of the whole male respondents. Moreover, the respectable numbers of the participants, who have chosen ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’ responses generally consist of highly addicted and addicted respondents. Nevertheless, the addiction level of participants who have chosen ‘not sure’ must not be avoided. Lastly, as it can be observed from the table, the percentage of general agreements of female participants is higher than males.



**Table 8: *Question 5: Constantly checking my smartphone so as not to miss conversations between people on Twitter or Facebook.***

<b>Responses</b>	<b>No. of Responses</b>			<b>Percentage %</b>		
	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>26.67</b>	<b>12.12</b>	<b>16.66</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>26.67</b>	<b>45.45</b>	<b>39.58</b>
<b>Not sure</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>20.00</b>	<b>6.07</b>	<b>10.42</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>13.33</b>	<b>36.36</b>	<b>29.17</b>
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>13.33</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>4.17</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Total percentages of Table 8 demonstrate that 56.24 percent of the participants generally agreed on constantly checking their smartphones. Even though, the sum of the percentages of responses given to ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’ by male and female participants were close, it can be seen that, female participants mostly chose ‘agree’ whereas male participants’ responses were equally distributed between ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’. Additionally, the high percentage of generally agreeing responses is positively correlated with participants who are found to be ‘addicted’ to their smartphones.

**Table 9: Question 6: Using my smartphone longer than I intended.**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>No. of Responses</b>			<b>Percentage %</b>		
	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>13.33</b>	<b>15.15</b>	<b>14.58</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>40.00</b>	<b>51.51</b>	<b>47.92</b>
<b>Not sure</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>20.00</b>	<b>9.09</b>	<b>12.50</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>20.00</b>	<b>21.21</b>	<b>20.83</b>
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6.67</b>	<b>3.03</b>	<b>4.17</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>99.99</b>	<b>100</b>

From Table 9, it can be seen that almost half of the participants (47.92%) agreed on using their smartphones ‘longer than intended’ whereas, total percentage of responses given to ‘disagree’ and ‘strongly disagree’ is only the quarter of participants (25.00%). Accordingly, from the percentages of responses given to this question, it can be observed that almost half of the participants are having difficulty with spending a moderate amount of time on their smartphones. Furthermore, a distinctive difference of percentages among genders is noticeable.

## ***Evaluation of Open Ended Questions***

Besides the Likert type questions, open ended questions were directed mainly to cross-check the obtained analysis results and to discover the mostly used applications by addicted participants.

### ***Question 7: How do you feel when you have no access to your smartphone?***

Especially Question 7 is of great importance for its possible function of directly gathering an important symptom of behavioral addictions. Accordingly, most participants who showed higher addictive symptoms on Likert type questions, which were also proven by testing the means of each participant to these questions, have also answered Question 7 with the same inclination.

The general percentage of responses gathered from both genders are: *41.66% feels normal, 37.50% feels incomplete, 6.25% feels worried and bad, 6.25% feels bored, and 8.33% feels peaceful*. As mentioned above, there is a positive correlation among addicted/highly addicted participants and their responses to Question 7. However, it was also slightly observed that, some participants who showed average mean of addiction symptoms have also answered this question with a symptom. Therefore, it can be assumed that, those participants are also at the risk of being addicted to their smartphones. On the other hand, participants who did not show addictive symptoms regarding to the means calculated, correspondingly did not answered Question 7 with a symptom.

### ***Question 8: Do you intentionally switch off your smartphone? How often?***

The analysis of Question 8, in association with Likert type questions means, did not support the study in the expected levels. There were no significant correlation among addicted participants' answers and the answers of non-addicted participants. The reason of this

conflict may be due to incorrect and missing method associated with this question. As stated above, the answers of Question 8 were irrational, and the probability of this error is due to not actually asking the participants the reason of switching their smartphones off. From the gathered responses, great difficulty has been experienced on analyzing the data due to lack of participants' actual reason for switching their smartphones off; maybe the behavior can be associated with work, travelling, studying, personal reasons and so on. Therefore, without distinguishing the real motivation of the behavior, it is nearly impossible to make a reasonable connection with whether the behavior is a symptom or not.

### ***Questions: 9, 10 and 11***

These questions were directed to respondents in order to identify the applications associated with smartphone addiction; namely, to gather information on the approximate number of applications being used. Additionally, to figure out the habitually used applications with the main purposes, and the most important applications were aimed to be discovered among participants, who are highly addicted to their smartphones.

- 9      How many different applications do you use on your smartphone?
- 10     Which applications do you use mostly? Please state the main purpose of using them.
- 11     Name your top five applications in a priority.

The distinction and the percentages that will be mentioned below, about being moderately addicted and highly addicted are based on the conducted analysis to general means of the symptoms observed from the answers of each participant.

According to the analysis' results on addicted and highly addicted participants, which consist of 47.9 percent of the 48 respondents, 14.58 percent of respondents are found to be highly addicted to their smartphones; the average number of applications they use is 8-9. 33.33 percent of the respondents who are moderately addicted, are each using 7 applications in average.

In addition to overall analysis, 16.66 percent of the participants have been showing a tendency towards smartphone addiction, whereas 35.44 percent of them were not addicted to their smartphones. However, the general percentages of addicted and highly addicted participants showed significant difference. The percentage distribution of highly addicted participants among genders is 42.85 percent males and 57.15 percent females. Moreover, concentrating on addicted participants' percentage distribution reveals that, 18.75 percent can be identified as males, however 81.25 percent were female. This may be due to unbalanced distribution of sample population, still it may also indicate females being more addicted to their smartphones.

Furthermore, in order to achieve greater comprehension of highly addicted participants, in terms of figuring out the possible associations of their high level of addiction, the analysis has been conducted on the applications mostly used by them. However, there is lack of available data on the purpose of using the mentioned applications. Therefore, it will not be taken into consideration in account of this analysis.

The results of the examination among respondents who are found to be highly addicted reveals that, Facebook has the highest rate, followed by Instagram and WhatsApp at the same frequency for the applications which are mostly used. Last but not least, in association with priority, the sum of highly addicted participants responded as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp within the same frequencies. This may be due to the small sample size of participants. However, as expected, question 10 and question 11 revealed the same applications as being mostly used and having the greatest importance for respondents who are highly addicted to their smartphones.

## ***Conclusion and further suggestions***

As mention earlier in Chapter 4, there is an unbalanced gender distribution of the study's population. However, as a consequence of overall analyses, it has been revealed that a respectable amount of participants are 'addicted' and 'highly addicted' to their smartphones. Additionally, the respondents who are inclined to be addicted must not be taken for granted.

In conclusion, it has been observed that the danger of addiction towards this new technological device is at unavoidable levels and the necessity of further research is clearly visible.

In association with conducted research, a greater number of sample populations with balanced gender distribution is required. Question 4 was found to not be as reliable as expected, and Question 10, where participants were asked to mention the main purpose of using the applications lacked available replies. Therefore re-evaluation of question 4 and 10 is recommended.

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