CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The emergence and popularity of the new media in the modern times seems to have flung open vast avenues and realms to exploration, comprehension and critical analysis. The insatiable interest of the intelligentsia as well as the commoner has thrown light on long standing questions and brought up intriguing issues. The chapter examines various studies conducted on the socio-cultural impact of the new media.

2.1. Studies on the Social Impact of Internet

In the mid 90s one of the hot topics that dominated the sphere of discourse was regarding sociability and the Internet. On the one hand people argued that there was something innovative about the virtual communities whereas others were of the opinion that online social networking would adversely affect the real life relationships of people. In this context, various researches and studies have been undertaken. The key research findings of some of the prominent studies conducted on sociability and Internet are given below.

2.1.1. Studies on Online and Offline Sociability

Online relationships are less valuable than offline ones. Their net benefit depends on whether they supplement or substitute for offline social relationships. The Longitudinal study of a community computer network known as the Blacksburg Electronic Village (BEV) showed that there is no evidence of an increase in community involvement or attachment, except for a minority of the population that scored highly on preexisting community involvement. These finds seem to support

Wellman’s belief that prior society capital is a prerequisite for a successful social network facilitated through Computer Mediated Communication.

Negative effects of using the Internet on social involvement and psychological well-being among new Internet users include a decline in communication with family members, decline in the size of their social circle, and an increase in their depression and loneliness. A 3-year follow up of the respondents found that the negative effects had dissipated. The 2001 article also reports finding from a longitudinal survey of new computer and television purchasers that shows generally positive effects of using the Internet on communication, social involvement, and well-being – but the findings comply with a “rich get richer” model in which the Internet helps extraverts socialize but shows worse outcomes for introverts and those with less support.

A number of surveys focused on the impact of the Internet on the quantity and quality of interpersonal communication and sociability. The key findings suggest that Internet users do not become more sociable; rather, they already displayed a higher degree of social connectivity and participation due to factors like education, income and age. Further more, due to the “inelasticity” of time; Internet use may reduce the interpersonal interaction and communication.

Data gathered within the EU e-living project in Norway, the UK, Germany, Italy, Bulgaria, and Israel indicate that Information and Communications Technology (ICT) can facilitate sociability when there is already a foundation to build upon, ICT cannot be used to build a foundation. It is beyond the role of ICT to create social networks although certain types of sociability can be developed through ICT. Reporting on a longitudinal study of household uses of the Internet in the UK conducted by BT, reports little difference between Internet user and non–user in their social behavior and everyday life.

Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) and telephone communications can reinforce one-another, particularly in contact with friends. The findings show that non-user is more likely to have person-to-person contact with relatives. They theorize that people who are more upper class tend to have more geographically dispersed friendships, and consequently, use CMC to keep in touch, while lower classes will have more casual contact with family and friends and less need to reach out over a
distance. Internet users attended more art events, watched more sports, and played more sports than non-users. The use of e-mail added to other social interactions and did not substitute for them.  

The study, “Integration of Internet Use with Public Spaces: College Students’ Use of the Wireless Internet and Offline Socializing”, by Namsu Park, Sookmyung Women's University, Seoul, South Korea, explores how wireless Internet use is related to college students’ face-to-face relationships with friends and acquaintances using survey data of 339 college students. Beyond simple analysis of total time of wireless Internet use, this study analyzes how location and timing of wireless Internet use is associated with face-to-face interactions. After controlling for demographics and time spent on other activities such as TV viewing and sleeping, wireless Internet use is positively related to the amount of time spent with friends and acquaintances. Specifically, wireless Internet use at school and hotspots is positively related to time spent with friends and acquaintances. Meanwhile, wireless use during both weekdays and weekends is related to increased time with friends and acquaintances.  

In 2007, Monica Barbovschi, Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, Babes-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca, Romania, conducted a study in order to investigate several factors associated with adolescents’ online-offline dating behavior (On-Off Dating), i.e. romantic encounters initiated online and transferred offline at a certain point. Due to the novelty of the topic in the Romanian context, multiple dimensions were taken into consideration. In order to move beyond the victimization perspective, the study relies mostly on the social agency theory that envisions teenagers as skilled and informed actors, who possess the technological, social and communicative competencies which enable them to distinguish between safe and unsafe situations (both online and offline). The sample consisted of 1806 subjects aged 10 to 19 who

38 Ibid.

completed a self-report questionnaire administered in 101 classrooms from secondary schools and high schools in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, in November 2007.

The results of the analysis of Monica Barbovschi indicate a series of factors significantly associated with this particular practice, with some differences for boys and girls, e.g. parental monitoring, identity management (disclosure and dissimulation), exposure to unsolicited (and deliberate) sexual material and unwanted solicitations online, use of Social Networking Sites (SNS), and several psycho-social factors. Among the most important predictors, e.g. use of Instant Messaging (IM), the amount of time spent online, and positive social self-concept appear to influence both boys’ and girls’ decision for online-offline dating. Other items, like parental monitoring and exposure to sexually explicit content, showed ambivalent relation to the investigated behavior.40

A study conducted by Nancy Shields and Jeremy Kane, from the University of Missouri-St. Louis on the “Social and Psychological Correlates of Internet Use among College Students”, examined the relationship between frequency of Internet use (and types of use) and several social and psychological variables, alcohol and drug use, and academic achievement among 215 students at an urban, commuter university. Frequency of Internet use was not related to symptoms of depression, but three of the types of use (starting the day on the Internet, visiting news sites, viewing videos) reduced symptoms of depression. Internet use was generally related to more face-to-face interaction, suggesting that Internet use is used to augment rather than replace social interaction.

However, the significant relationships between Internet use and quality of relationships with parents and significant others tended to be negative. These results are discussed in relation to “The Rich Get Richer” and the “Social Compensation”

approaches. Binge drinking and drug use were related to Internet use that might be used to promote social activities. Visiting a sexually explicit web site was the exception, and suggests it could serve a purpose similar to substance use. Grade point average (GPA) was both positively and negatively associated with specific types of Internet use, but the most surprising finding was a positive association between GPA and visiting sexually explicit sites. This finding is discussed from the perspective of the “challenge hypothesis.” Overall, the findings suggest that the past emphasis in research on Internet addiction may have resulted in a bias toward negative findings.41

2.1.2. Studies on the Effects of Social Networking

Nearly half of the online adult population around the world is a member of at least one networking site, with Facebook and MySpace between them housing over 70 million monthly active users, Social Networking has come to stay. Other social media activity is also continuing to grow at a frenetic pace. According to Wave3 research of active users: 394m watch video clips online, 346m read blogs, 332m read personal blogs, 307m visit friend’s social net work page, 303m share a video clip, 272m manage a profile on a social net work, 248m upload photos, 216m download video podcasts, 215m download podcasts, 184m start their own Blot, 83m upload a video clip, 160m subscribe to an RSS feed (VNU.net). In Britain, users spend the majority of their time online on social media sites, spending four billion minutes on consumer generated content sites in April 2008.42

Content itself is also evolving, as users are no longer just logging on for relevant news. According to new research, 62% of people are more likely to trust and use online reviews written by fellow shoppers before making a purchase, whilst time


spent on search sites has also increased by 13% to 1.3 billion minutes. This has led to an overall decrease in the amount of time spent on traditional news sites.43

A major study published by the USC Annenberg School on the Impact of the Internet on the American Society suggests that the online world is becoming as important as the offline world. A longitudinal survey conducted on Internet use over a span of six years by the Centre for the Digital Future provides unique insights as to how the cyberspace has weaved itself into the socio-cultural fabric of the modern society. Americans with Internet access spend an average of 8.9 hours online each week.44

The research findings say that 12.5 percent of Internet users are maintaining a website and 7.4 percent publishing a blog. Similarly, 23.6 percent of netizens post photos online, double the amount of photo hounds who were sharing their pictures a scant three years ago. The study also documents how the Internet impacts relationships. Internet users report having formed friendships with an average of 4.65 people a year - people they’ve never met in person. Nearly half of those surveyed - 42.8 percent - say that the Internet has increased the amount of contact they have with friends and family. For many people, these interactions are taking place in online communities. Just over half of online community members log in to their communities on a daily basis, while 70 percent of them interact with their fellow community members on a regular basis.

Perhaps one of the most interesting results of the survey is the suggestion that online communities have a direct impact on civic participation. Just over one-fifth of online community members - 20.3 percent - take action offline for a cause related to their online communities at least once a year. Nearly 65 percent of online community members say they now engage in civic causes that were new to them when they started going online, while an additional 43.7 percent say they participate in social activism more since they’ve joined their online communities. This may explain why

43 Ibid.

43 percent of online community members feel as strongly about their virtual life as they do about their real-world life.

The research also samples parents’ opinions about their kids’ Internet use. More than 70 percent of parents say their kids spend the right amount of time online each week. This may seem like a resounding endorsement of youth Internet use, but it’s not, since this percentage has dropped steadily in the six years of the longitudinal study, suggesting that a growing number of parents are troubled by the amount of time their sons and daughters are online. And three-quarters of parents surveyed said their kids’ grades haven’t improved since they started going online. 45

The social networking (SNS) phenomenon have grown from a niche to a mass online activity, in which tens of millions of Internet users are engaged, both in their leisure time, and at work. However, there has been very little research on the socio-economic impact of these sites in the European context. The case study on SNS conducted by the European Commission’s Joint Research Centre (JRC IPTS), is part of an exploratory research project. The study aims to explore and identify the social and economic implications of SNS in Europe. 46 The findings of the research are given below.

These sites have led to new ways of maintaining and managing social networks. Most users use them to ‘social search’ people they have met offline, to stay in touch and to consolidate relations with core friends. Others extend their networks, using their online visibility to augment professional opportunities, amplify weak ties and to exploit their 15 minutes of fame. SNS support various forms of network visualisation. Until recently, visualisations of social networks were typically articulated in address books or diaries, both of which tend to be associated with some level of privacy. SNS support the sharing and disclosure of online social networks. This is possibly one of the first times online users have been able to view their own online social networks and how their friends are connected between themselves. The visualisation of online

45 Ibid.

social networks raises various issues. It is important to understand what motivates users to have large networks, what are the implications of publishing one's network and to what extent SNS technology is pushing users to accept the publication of their data, though this would previously have been seen by them as an infringement of their privacy.  

The dynamic ways in which users present themselves on SNS suggest that these sites allow a process of self exploration, identity redefinition and negotiation of social structures. Notions of anonymity and pseudonimity previously associated with online communication are being replaced by information about the seemingly real self. For many adolescents, SNS and other online applications become the first locations where they can hover alone without their parents Profiles act like hyperlinked avatars, creating intricate narratives according to the interactions and movement of the users. Always-on usage, the blurring of the distinction between the virtual and the real and disclosure of private data are other aspects which emerge as a result of increased usage of SNS.  

Young people are both at the core of these emerging technologies as they use them the most, but they are also at risk. For some adolescents, these platforms have become a way to advertise their own selves and to declare their identity. As with any other social problem or threat to young people in society, banning access to these sites is not the best solution. Young Internet users are often intelligent enough to find new ways of accessing SNS. As suggested by the European Network and Information Security Agency (ENISA), more awareness-raising and educational campaigns highlighting safe usage of SNS are needed. It is important that people learn how to manage their online data.  

The take-up of SNS in European countries is not homogenous, mainly because local SNS enjoy a substantial share of this market. Linguistic and cultural differences seem to dominate European SNS uptake. Seemingly, as users increasingly influence the

47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
development of SNS, the closer SNS get to practices that are deeply embedded in local cultural value. Language, for example, is a major driver leading to the success of local SNS. At the same time, the enduring popularity of the big SNS in Europe suggests that these also play a significant role. These global SNS each provide one network through which users across different countries and continents can connect to each other.\(^50\)

The value of SNS is not based on finance, but rather on the accumulation of 'reputation capital'. Part of the attraction of SNS for users is the fact that they do not have to pay for the services offered. The exceptions to the rule are dating SNS, which often request an initial membership fee for the matching service they provide. However, in general terms, we observe that no business model for SNS seems to be dominant at present, though new models may be emerging. A major challenge for most SNS is the definition of a business model that is sustainable and generates revenue. Currently, email providers and SNS are striving for the loyalty of their users, and it may be that these two players may be competing against each other in the near future.\(^51\)

Questions have been raised about the social impact of widespread use of social networking sites (SNS) like Facebook, LinkedIn, MySpace, and Twitter. Do these technologies isolate people and truncate their relationships? Or are there benefits associated with being connected to others in this way? The Pew Research Center’s Internet & American Life Project decided to examine SNS in a survey that explored people’s overall social networks and how use of these technologies is related to trust, tolerance, social support, and community and political engagement.\(^52\)

The findings presented here paint a rich and complex picture of the role that digital technology plays in people’s social worlds. Wherever possible, we seek to disentangle whether people’s varying social behaviors and attitudes are related to the different

\(^50\) Ibid.

\(^51\) Ibid.

ways they use social networking sites, or to other relevant demographic characteristics, such as age, gender and social class. The number of those using social networking sites has nearly doubled since 2008 and the population of SNS users has gotten older.

In this Pew Internet sample, 79% of American adults said they used the Internet and nearly half of adults (47%), or 59% of Internet users, say they use at least one of SNS. This is close to double the 26% of adults (34% of Internet users) who used a SNS in 2008. Among other things, this means the average age of adult-SNS users has shifted from 33 in 2008 to 38 in 2010. Over half of all adult SNS users are now over the age of 35. Some 56% of SNS users now are female. Facebook dominates the SNS space in this survey: 92% of SNS users are on Facebook; 29% use MySpace, 18% used LinkedIn and 13% use Twitter. There is considerable variance in the way people use various social networking sites: 52% of Facebook users and 33% of Twitter users engage with the platform daily, while only 7% of MySpace and 6% of LinkedIn users do the same.

Social networking sites are increasingly used to keep up with close social ties. Looking only at those people that SNS users report as their core discussion confidants, 40% of users have friended all of their closest confidants. This is a substantial increase from the 29% of users who reported in our 2008 survey that they had friended all of their core confidants. MySpace users are more likely to be open to opposing points of view.

The researchers measured “perspective taking,” or the ability of people to consider multiple points of view. There is no evidence that SNS users, including those who use Facebook, are any more likely than others to cocoon themselves in social networks of like-minded and similar people, as some have feared. Moreover, regression analysis found that those who use MySpace have significantly higher levels of perspective taking. The average adult scored 64/100 on a scale of perspective taking, using regression analysis to control for demographic factors, a MySpace user who uses the site a half dozen times per month tends to score about 8 points higher on the scale.  

53 Ibid.
A study conducted by Pavica Sheldon, Department of Communication Studies, Louisiana State University, USA titled "I'll poke you. You'll poke me: Self-disclosure, social attraction, predictability and trust as important predictors of Facebook relationships", examines how social attraction on Facebook influences self-disclosure, predictability, and trust in another individual. Results of a survey of 243 students showed that we tell our personal secrets on Facebook to those whom we like. Although many nonverbal cues are absent on Facebook, its users still perceive a high predictability of their Facebook friends’ behavior. Facebook users have very little uncertainty about the behavior of the person to whom they intimately self-disclose to. Our findings support Uncertainty Reduction Theory – the more Facebook users talk, the less uncertainty they experience and are able to like each other more. The more certain they are about their behavior, the more they trust them, and the more they trust them, the more they disclose to them.\(^\text{54}\)

The study conducted by Sonja Utz and Nicole C. Krämer, VU University Amsterdam, the Netherlands University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany, to examine “The privacy paradox on social network sites revisited: The role of individual characteristics and group norms”. Users of social network sites (SNS) often state that they are concerned about their privacy, yet they often disclose detailed personal information on their profiles. This paper assessed the privacy settings of users of two large European SNS. More importantly, it also examined which factors predict the choice of specific privacy settings. The main focus was on the trade-off between privacy concerns and impression management.

The paper also looked at the role of the dispositional variables trust and narcissism. These individual factors were contrasted with the effects of perceived group norms. Across three studies it was found that the vast majority of users protected at least certain parts of their profile (e.g., pictures, email address). Moreover, higher

protection of profiles was consistently predicted by greater privacy concerns. Impression management motives and narcissism led to less restrictive privacy settings, but these results were less consistent across studies. Perceived social norms played a role in both SNS, whereas dispositional trust had no effect.  

2.1.3. Studies on the Effects of Internet on Consumers

The telecommunications industry continues to insist that functions such as entertainment and home shopping will be the driving forces behind the construction of the information super highway. Yet, there is a growing body of evidence that suggests that consumers want more information-related services, and would be more willing to pay for these than for movies-on-demand, video games, or home shopping services.

Two surveys published in October 1994 had very similar findings. According to the Wall Street Journal, a Lou Harris Poll found a total of 63% of consumers surveyed saying, they would be interested in using their TV or PC to receive health-care information, lists of government services, phone numbers of businesses and non-profit groups, product reviews and similar information. In addition, almost three-quarters said they would like to receive a customized news report, and about half said they would like some sort of communications services, such as the ability to send messages to others. But only 40% expressed interest in movie-on-demand or in ordering sports programs, and only about a third said they want interactive shopping.

A survey commissioned by MacWorld which claims to be one of the most extensive benchmarks of consumer demand for interactive services yet conducted, found that


56 “The Information Super Highway: Social and Cultural Impact”,

consumers are much more interested in using emerging networks for information access, community involvement, and communication, than for entertainment. Out of a total of 26 possible online capabilities, respondents rated video-on-demand tenth, with only 28% indicating that this service was highly desirable. Much more desirable activities included on-demand access to reference materials, distance learning, interactive report on local schools, and access to information about government services and training. Thirty-four percent of the sample was willing to pay over $10 per month for distance learning, yet only 19% was willing to pay that much for video-on-demand or other entertainment services.⁵⁷

A significant amount of material placed on the Internet is designed to reach a single person, handful of people, or a group of less than 1,000. Yet commercial distributors planning to use the Information Super Highway will have to reach tens (or more likely hundreds) of thousands of users just to justify the costs of mounting multimedia servers and programs. This will inevitably result in a shifting away from the Internet’s orientation towards small “niche” audiences; the Information Super Highway will be designed for a mass audience (and even “niche” markets will be “mass” markets created by joining enough small regional groups together to form a national mass market).⁵⁸

In recent years we have seen the extreme version of this, where controversial programmes have actually been eliminated from network television and radio, cable, local broadcast stations, and even art museums due to pressure from various organizations. But, perhaps less obvious is the fact that the overwhelming majority of programming focuses on elements that appeal to most people and not to everyone (the least-common-denominator), and this is due to the orientation towards of mass audience.

The Internet is a critically important research site for sociologists testing theories of technology diffusion and media effects, particularly because it is a medium uniquely capable of integrating modes of communication and forms of content, current research

⁵⁷ Ibid.
⁵⁸ Ibid.
tends to focus on the Internet’s implication in five domains: 1) inequality (the digital divide); 2) Community and social capital; 3) political participation; 4) organizations and other economic institutions; and 5) cultural participation and cultural diversity. A recurrent theme across domains is that the Internet tends to complement rather than displace existing media and patterns of behavior. Thus in each domain, utopian claims and dystopic warnings based on extrapolations from technical possibilities have given way to more nuanced and circumscribed understandings of how Internet use adapts to existing patterns, permits certain innovations, and reinforces particular kinds of change. Moreover, in each domain the ultimate social implications of this new technology depend on economic, legal, and policy decisions that are shaping the Internet as it becomes institutionalized. Sociologists need to study the Internet more actively and, particularly, to synthesize research findings on individual user behavior with macroscopic analyses of institutional and political-economic factors that constrain that behavior.  

A study conducted by Tomomi Hanai and Takashi Oguchi, Nikkei Media Marketing, INC., Japan College of Contemporary Psychology, Rikkyo University, Japan, “How do consumers perceive the reliability of online shops?”, investigated what kind of information contributes to trust formation in online shopping. Twenty-seven female undergraduate students were recruited and asked to evaluate the trustworthiness of 20 online shopping websites. All the online shopping websites dealt with branded products where there is greater emphasis on the trustworthiness of online shops or products. The results show that information described on the websites was classified into two categories, firstly, information about the shop and its procedures and services. Secondly, the concrete information necessary for the consumption process, such as payment information and return information, which heightens the reliability of these shops.

2.1.4. Studies on the Effects of Gambling/Gaming

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59 Ibid.

Dr. Jonathan Parke, senior lecturer in Gambling Studies at the Centre for the Study of Gambling, University of Salford, Manchester and Mark D. Griffiths in their research paper on “The Social Impact of Internet Gambling” point that one of the fastest growing new market opportunities is that of Internet gambling. The effect of such technologies should not be accepted uncritically, particularly as there may be areas of potential concern based on what is known about the problem of gambling offline. The research findings conclude that the technological developments in Internet gambling will increase the potential for the problem of gambling globally.61

New media technologies tap into fears about what they do to us individually and collectively. One example of this is the “River City” reaction that draws on conservative fears about media’s harmful effects on youth, countering on aggression and social isolation. Reaction to video games and the Internet are current examples of this phenomenon. This dissertation explores the issue on two levels: What issues are apparent in these fears? Are these fears justified? As background, a basic history of video gaming is presented. Next, the social concerns raised by video gaming are tracked through a content analysis of media framing, supporting an analysis of social issues. This analysis reveals how games have been contested sites for gender, age and place and how reactions to them have helped maintain inequalities. The second half of the dissertation turns to an empirical study of games uses and effects, focusing on both the “River City” issues and on the social network created by games. The new era of networked, online gaming demands that this work be integrated with Internet studies. Using the concept of “social capital,” new scales are developed and validated to test for the social impacts of an Internet activity.

The dissertation concludes with a large field based panel study of online games, Asheron’s Call 2, and its players. After a participant observation study, the game is used as a stimulus to test hypotheses about negative displacement, aggression and health issues, as well as social impacts on individuals, community and habits. The results show that the game has few of the negative River City impacts associated with the common stereotype of games, including the contentious issue of aggression.

Socially, the results are more complex. The game is shown to lead to a degree of social withdrawal at the same time as it improves some measures of community spirit and activism. Lastly, an unexpected cultivation like finding emerged in the analysis, suggesting that online world can effect real-world perceptions.62

The research conducted by Daniel King and Paul Delfabbro, The University of Adelaide, Australia, and Mark Griffiths, Nottingham Trent University, United Kingdom in their paper, “The Role of Structural Characteristics in Problem Video Game Playing: A Review”, examined the structural characteristics of video games may play an important role in explaining why some people play video games to excess. This paper provides a review of the literature on structural features of video games and the psychological experience of playing video games. The dominant view of the appeal of video games is based on operant conditioning theory and the notion that video games satisfy various needs for social interaction and belonging. However, there is a lack of experimental and longitudinal data that assesses the importance of specific features in video games in excessive video game playing. Various challenges in studying the structural features of video games are discussed. Potential directions for future research are outlined, notably the need to identify what problem (as opposed to casual) players seek from the video games they play.63

2.1.5. Studies on the Negative/Unethical Practices on the Internet

The study, “Definition and Measurement of Cyberbullying”, by Petra Gradinger, Dagnar Strohmeier and Christiane Spiel carried out with the aim of improving the conceptual understanding of cyberbullying by empirically comparing the number of identified bullies and cyberbullies based on two measurement methods (global vs. specific items) and two cut off scores (lenient vs. strict). 1150 students (48% girls) aged 10 to 15 years were examined via self assessments. The number of cyberbullies


was systematically underestimated when using a global item compared with three specific items indicating that the global cyberbullying item did not fully cover the behaviors described by the three specific cyberbullying items. Only 73 students (6.3%) were identified as occasional cyberbullies and 18 (1.6%) as frequent cyberbullies using the global item, while 186 students (16.2%) were identified as occasional cyberbullies and 87 (7.6%) as frequent cyberbullies using the specific items assessment.

Controlling for traditional bullying, only 12 students (1%) remained pure occasional cyberbullies and only six students (0.5%) remained pure frequent cyberbullies when using the global item. According to the specific items assessment, 59 students (5.1%) remained pure occasional cyberbullies and 56 (4.9%) remained pure frequent cyberbullies. Thus, a distinct cyberbully group could only be identified when using a specific items assessment. Irrespective of measurement method and cut off scores, combined bullies (students being both cyberbullies and bullies) showed higher levels in overt and relational aggression compared with bullies and non bullies. Girls expressed higher levels of overt aggression than boys when they were identified as frequent combined bullies.64

The research by Brendesha M, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA, Chad A. Rose, Sam Houston State University, USA and David R. Williams, Harvard University, USA, “The Development and Validation of the Online Victimization Scale for Adolescents”, outlines the development and validation of the Online Victimization Scale (OVS). The OVS consists of four subscales capturing individuals’ experiences with online victimization across general, sexual, and racial domains. Online surveys were administered in two studies from 2007-2009 to two diverse groups of adolescents ages 14-19 from high schools in the United States. A confirmatory factor analytic procedure was performed in Study 1 and Study 2, and both sets of analyses supported the hypothesized four-factor model for online

victimization. Correlation results showed that online experiences associated with each domain of victimization were related to increased depressive symptoms, perceived stress, and anxiety and decreased self-esteem and satisfaction with life. The OVS is a comprehensive measure of online experiences that may be used in research, clinical and educational settings. Results are consistent with other victimization and discrimination measures that show correlations with poor mental health outcomes.  

Joshua Fogel and Sam Shlivko examines the menaces of spam and pornography in the cyberspace in their research titled “Singles Seeking a Relationship and Pornography Spam E-mail: An Understanding of Consumer Purchasing Behavior and Behaviors Antecedent to Purchasing”. Spam e-mail on the topic of pornography often arrives online through the Internet in e-mail inboxes. We surveyed college students (n=200) who were single and seeking a relationship and those who were not single and seeking a relationship about if they received, opened/read, or purchased products from pornography spam e-mail. Those single and seeking a relationship had significantly greater percentages than those not single and seeking a relationship for receiving, opening/reading, and purchasing products from pornography spam e-mail. In the multivariate analyses adjusting for numerous demographic and psychological variables, there was an incremental increasing pattern of increasing odds ratios for those single and seeking a relationship for receiving, opening/reading, and purchasing products from pornography spam e-mail. No sex differences between men and women occurred for receiving, opening/reading, or purchasing products from pornography spam e-mail. Pornography spam e-mail has an interested consumer audience among those single and seeking a relationship.  


Konečný. Š., investigates the negative behavior pattern of lying that is apparently rampant in the virtual space in the research, “Virtual Environment and Lying: Perspective of Czech Adolescents and Young Adults”. The goal of the study was to find out how the frequency of lying varies in diverse environments of the Internet, who is the most frequent recipient of lies and what are typical motivations for lying. The researchers were interested in how these variables partake in the frequency of lying in various areas of the Internet (e-mail, chat rooms, discussion forums, instant messengers, computer games). Having taken into account the effect of various environments on various subjects of lies: lying about one’s age, gender, employment, education, income, appearance, results were compared based on gender as well as age groups – 914 respondents in total were divided into three age groups, namely adolescents (12-18), emerging adults (19-26) and adults (27+).

The researchers have studied the most frequent recipients of lies and have found no significant differences between women and men in this respect; lying to individuals of the same gender is however more frequent for women, whereas lying toward the group of people is more typical for men. For various age groups, we can thus differentiate various areas about which they feel the greatest urge to lie – for the youngest group this includes age and physical appearance, most often in chat rooms. The middle group sees a shift of priorities towards “stable manifestations of adulthood” – such as their work or income. This is true especially for men; women do not feel the urge to lie about their age, but on the other hand more often lie about their appearance. The oldest age group then focuses on income for men, appeal and appearance for women and one’s age for both genders.

“Internet Addiction and Relationships Formed on the Internet Among University Students” a study by Jacob Mathew Pulikotil, probes into the problem of Internet addiction. Internet addiction is a contemporary problem brought about by easy access to computers and online interactions, some of which are self-reinforcing. Anecdotal

reports indicate that some online users are becoming addicted to the Internet in much that same way that others became addicted to drugs or alcohol, resulting in academic, social and or occupational impairment. However, Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD) has still not been formally identified as a mental disorder. This study investigated the extent of Internet use, levels of Internet addiction, and degree of intimacy in relationships formed on the Internet among students of Assumption University, Bangkok, Thailand.  

Data analysis indicated that most of the students used the Internet in excess of 7 hours/week, with 95% meeting the cut-off for at least “mild” Internet addiction. Chatting was the overall preferred activity for both male and female students, followed by web cam and talk for females and online games for males. Most of the Internet relationships formed fell at the “emotional” level of intimacy. The data support the literature that male students prefer visual stimuli (sex-related websites) and female students favour enhancing relationships through communication (general talk channels). The study also found that both genders browsed the Internet to find love and clinical psychologists, behavioral counselors, psychiatrists, and addiction therapists.

2.2. Studies on the Cultural impact of Internet

Studies suggest that cultural options available in an online environment will be dominated by mass-market productions that do not offend. But as more and more people rely on online access to culture, this shift is also likely to have a great effect on how people view culture, as well as on the perception and internal workings of our cultural repositories (such as museums and libraries).

As it becomes more and more convenient to view high-quality representations of cultural objects (and accompanying explanatory information) on the home computer, people are likely to visit museums less frequently. As more and more people access representations of museum objects without entering the edifice, the authority of the museum (and its personnel) will rapidly erode. In libraries, we are already beginning

to see that the people who have traditionally served as caretakers of onsite collections are instead becoming designers without the direct help of museum and library personnel; we see a great diminishment in their role as intermediaries.

As individuals look at more and more cultural objects on their workstation screens, it is likely that they will begin to confuse the representations with the original objects they represent. This is part of a general leveling effect (equating abstracts of experiences for the experiences themselves) that appears to be an integral part of contemporary life. This is not unlike viewing a video and equating that experience with watching a film in a theatre, or eating a McDonalds and calling it a meal. Though, in an online system, more people gain greater access to cultural objects, this type of access eliminates a richness and depth of experience—what Walter Benjamin called the ‘aura’.  

The widespread viewing of digital images poses interesting authenticity and authorship questions. Because, digital images can be seamlessly altered, how can the viewer be sure that the image on view has not been manipulated? A number of magazines have placed purposely altered images on their covers (Time Magazine’s June 24, 1994 darkened mug short of OJ Simpson, New York Newsday’s Feb 16, 1994 photo falsely showing Tonya Harding and Nancy Kerrigan skating together, spy magazine’s Feb 1993 short of Hillary Clinton in a bondage outfit, and Mirabella’s September 1994 composite photo of several models’ faces). Although in the above examples the magazine admitted (often in tiny print) that they altered the photos. In the future we are likely to see more and more such alterations without the publishers altering the audience.

“Culture, Internet and Gratifications: Do you see the Connection?”, a research by Tulika Biswas, University of Tennessee Knoxville presents a pilot study focusing on gratifications sought and obtained by international students from the Internet. The study suggests that for immigrants and sojourners such as international students the

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need to get in touch with their native culture may form an important factor driving their gratification needs while surfing the Internet.\textsuperscript{70}

“Culture & Technology in South Korean and U.S. Online Military Strategic Communications” Sungwook Hwang, University of Missouri, Columbia, a study conducted across cultural comparison in measures of interactivity and vividness of South Korean and the U.S. online military strategic communications based on Hall’s high – and low-context communication and Hofstede’s power distance and individualism/ collectivism, Considering contradictory literature regarding the influence of culture on the Web, this study examined the applicability of the cultural lens on the technological features of non-commercial Web sites.\textsuperscript{71}

The study, “The Impact of Cultural Distance and Linguistic Difference on Standardization of Global Corporate Communications through the World Wide Web: A Content Analysis of the US Global Brands International Web pages” by Kyoo-Hoon Han and Glen T. Cameron, University of Missouri-Columbia attempts to examine how cultural distance and linguistic difference are associated with global brands’ corporate communications for foreign markets through their international Web pages. For the selected four countries – the UK, France, Hong Kong, and South Korea – were analyzed. The results indicate that greater cultural distance between the countries leads to more differences in information cues and structural features between US global brands’ US Web page and the respective international Web pages.\textsuperscript{72}


An examination of the conditions facilitating Internet technology for inter-firm communication in the Thai tourism industry reveals some interesting points on the role of local culture on technology transfer to developing countries. Although the Internet technology seems to be a strategic tool in the globalization process and globalization has resulted in the emergence of a ‘world culture’ concept. The world culture is “the idea that as traditional barriers among people of different cultures break down, emphasizing the commonality of human needs, one culture will emerge, a new culture to which all people will adhere”. Consequently, both developing countries and researchers tend to have less concern about the role of local culture on Internet technology for inter-firm communication transfer from Western to Asian countries. Some assume that the adoption of this technology in developing countries will be driven by the global competition and multinational corporations. This research found evidence to suggest that Thai culture does shape the adoption of Internet technology in the Thai tourism industry.

The findings highlight some contradictory aspects of the use of Internet technology for inter-firm communication between Western philosophy underlining the benefits of the Internet and the actuality of technology adoption in Thailand. This leads to a critique on the expected benefits from Internet technology in developing countries, especially in Asian countries, where there is a significant cultural difference from Western culture. For instance, Westerners believe that the Internet will enhance the networking capabilities of companies which will lead to a better competitive position and also bridge the gap between business people of different nations and cultures.


74 Ibid.
also argues that this may not simulate trading opportunities in an Asian context. Networking enhances competitive advantage by providing access to the resources of other network members. However, the local cultural aspect for example, Guanxi, which emphasizes the role of the trusted insider, conflict with Western’s new social network concept, which suggests that the new information and opportunities are critical for survival.\(^{75}\)

Therefore, developing countries, such as Thailand should consider cultural aspects when adopting e-Tourism technology. Although Thailand has the economic pressure to adopt these technologies in being a part of the globalisation to survive on an international scale. We can see that the adoption of Internet technology does not always create the benefits to local firms as it does for Western firms. Thus, if Thai tourism firms who wish to have an effective use of Internet technology, it is suggested that they should design the e-strategies that are suitable to the local requirement.\(^{76}\)

The research by **Brian Wilson** on “Ethnography, the Internet, and Youth Culture: Strategies for Examining Social Resistance and “Online-Offline Relationships” says that the integration of traditional (offline and face-to-face) and virtual ethnographic methods can aid researchers interested in developing understandings of relationships between online and offline cultural life, and examining the diffusion and sometimes global character of youth resistance. In constructing this argument, the researcher has used insights from studies on youth activism and the rave sub-culture. These studies also led the researcher to believe that an approach to research underscored by sensitivity to everyday experiences and the power structures framing these

\(^{75}\) Ibid.

\(^{76}\) Ibid.
experiences can (still) be a powerful guide for understanding flows and circuits of resistance in Internet-influenced cultures.⁷⁷

This sort of research contributes to a body of work in education focused around the diffusion of knowledge from and through various media. Ultimately, by considering how more conventional approaches to studying social groups’ relationships with and use of the Internet (as an interactive, global medium) and the social-political context that Internet use takes place within, a better understanding of media, youth and resistance, and cultural experience into the twenty-first century can be approached.⁷⁸

“Digital audiences: Engagement with arts and culture online”, the findings of the study by Arts Council, England confirm that engaging with the arts through digital media is now a mainstream activity. Crucially, this engagement augments, rather than replaces, the live experience. Just as live music has grown stronger in the era of iTunes, so people still want shared, live experiences in other arts and cultural genres. However, this is not to demote the Internet to the role of marketing channel: a significant minority of us uses the Internet to consume, share and create artistic content.⁷⁹

Specifically, the survey of a 2000-strong sample of the English adult online population finds that: Over half of the online population (53%) has used the Internet to engage with the arts and cultural sector in the last 12 months. Interaction with arts and cultural content in digital environments can be classified into five main categories: access, learn, experience, share and create. People currently use digital media primarily as a complement to, rather than a substitute for, the live experience.


⁷⁸ Ibid.

Music is the genre showing the highest level of online engagement – however, opportunities for other cultural genres remain strong. Social media – and in particular Facebook – has become a major tool for discovering as well as sharing information about arts and culture, second only to organic search through Google and other search engines. Brands are really important for audiences in discovering and filtering content online.  

People who engage with arts and cultural content online tend to participate in the arts through live events as well. People fall into five distinct segments based on their behavior and attitudes to the arts and digital media. Three of these segments are of particular interest to arts and cultural organizations, Confident core (29%), late adopters (21%) and Leading edge (11%).

The findings from this report clearly show that the Internet is changing the way we consume, share and create arts and cultural content and experiences. As a result of these changes, arts and cultural organizations are faced with a dizzying array of opportunities for broadening and deepening their engagement with their audiences. The Internet is a marketing and audience development tool, but also a core platform for booking tickets, distributing content and delivering immersive, participative arts experiences (be that a Twitter book club, a location based mobile app guiding us through an exhibition, or something entirely different). However, this research also shows that the direct revenue opportunities associated with many of these opportunities can be limited.

Although exciting, the Internet can represent additional cost without any guarantee of additional revenue: arts organizations will need to strike a balance between ambition and pragmatism when deciding where to invest their money in digital media. One area of investment which can yield clear financial returns is marketing and audience development. The Internet is a key route to finding out what is on and then filtering and planning attendance at live events. Arts organizations that are skilled in digital

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80 Ibid.
81 Ibid.
82 Ibid.
marketing will (all other things being equal) see more people through their doors than ones that rely on a brochureware website and email newsletters. Equally, it is important not to relegate the Internet to the role of marketing channel.  

The respondents saw the Internet first and foremost as augmenting the live experience rather than replacing it, but this did not just mean providing listings and e-ticketing. The Leading edge segment welcomes and already uses the genuinely immersive and participative arts and cultural experiences that are already available online. This report confirms that there is an appetite for the sector to innovate and create a new generation of experiences that take advantage of some of the internet’s unique characteristics – however challenging that may be given the current economic climate. The opportunities are exciting, but they do represent an additional cost. Arts organizations will need to strike a balance between ambition and pragmatism when deciding where to invest their money in digital media, especially as the current business models do not guarantee additional direct revenue.  

2.3 Studies on the Social Impact of Mobile Phones

When mobile phones entered the arena of communications for the first time, not only did it equip people with the ability to communicate with friends, family and colleagues anytime and anywhere, but also began to subtly change human social behaviour and has made a huge cultural impact. With technology advancing by the moment, and companies looking perennially to satisfy the insatiable desire of the consumers for latest gadgets, mobile phones are increasingly becoming multitask machines, with cameras, games consoles and mp3/video players. On the one hand, mobile phone is a wonderful invention that enables people to communicate with anyone, anywhere in the world; but on the other hand, the device can also be looked at as an apparent cause for the changing in human social behavior. The various studies on the social impacts of mobile phones are given below.  

83 Ibid.  

84 Ibid.
“Cellular Phones Influence (s) and Impact (s) On Social Interactions and Interpersonal Relationships” a study by Alexia Corbett seeks to explore how cellular phones (cell phones/mobiles) have influenced and impacted social interactions and interpersonal relationships. There have been a number of suggested theories and studies that have been contributed to the rising popularity and commonality of cell phones as to how they are affecting the way individuals are interacting in society. Some of these include a change in the concept of time and space, lack of face-to-face interaction, the maintenance of relationships, social absences, and social dependency. In addition to these ideas, it has also been suggested that the use of cell phones has had a negative affect on social relationships, grammar, and increased social anxiety.85

Omotayo Banjo, Yifeng Hu and S. Shyam Sundar in their Observational research, “Cell Phone Usage and Social Interaction with Proximate Others: Ringing in a Theoretical Model”, on the social impact of cell phone usage in public places suggests that the mere presence of cell phones in public conflicts the private and public spheres and inhibits social interaction with proximate others (strangers or known persons).86 The purpose of this paper is to develop a theoretical model for which social effects of cell phone usage in public places documented in observational studies can be empirically tested.

In this paper, the researchers discuss various variables to consider in the study of cell phone usage (CPU) and social interaction with proximate others (SIPO). We offer a modest experiment of CPU in the context of social participation, a form of social interaction. Focusing on helping behavior in particular, results indicate that while on the cell phone, users are less likely to offer help. Findings imply that CPU in public


places can distract users from social responsibilities, as they neglect the environment surrounding.  

The study conducted by **Virpi Oksman**, “Young People and Seniors in Finnish 'Mobile Information Society’’, tries to answer questions such as, What is the significance of the mobile phone in the social relationships of young people and seniors? What kinds of informal and formal learning strategies do young people and seniors have in acquiring mobile phone and other ICT literacies? Young age groups have for long been the most active mobile phone users, but in the last few years the mobile phone use of over 60-year-olds has also been growing very rapidly in Finland and in other countries. This article presents research findings based on several research projects conducted at the University of Tampere on the use of mobile communication and the Internet among young people, families and seniors since the late 1990s.

The research aims to explore the spread of mobile and Internet trends through study of communication and social networks among young people and seniors. The main methods have consisted of group discussions and thematic interviews among young people and seniors. By 2006, over 1500 Finns have participated in the study. The research indicates that for older generations, for whom it still constitutes a relatively new aspect in their personal histories and daily lives, the meaning of the mobile phone is highly different than for young people who have grown up into ICT citizens. Knowing the actual use contexts and user experiences of technology among different generations in their daily life can provide important insights on how to improve design and services associated with the technologies.  

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87 Ibid.


89 Ibid.
Zdeňka Vykoukalová, Department of Psychology, Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic, in her research “Adolescent Mobile Communication: Transformation of Communication Patterns of Generation SMS?”, tries to investigate the influence of mobile phones on adolescent communication behavior. Three classes of grammar school students, i.e. 73 adolescents aged 17 to 19, participated in the mixed research design. The research was focused on following topics: contextualizing adolescents’ mobile communication, the symbolic meaning of the device and the transformation of communication with two significant others: parents and partners. The research found that SMS (Short Messaging Service) are used mostly with peers, and voice communication with parents. The purpose of the study was to determine how the device was viewed by the subjects in terms of symbolic meaning of the device itself. The study also looked forward to comprehend for which functions they use mobile phones and how they use them, particularly in the possible effects on their relations with both parents and partners.

According to Czech young people, the mobile phone is the most important communication device in their everyday lives. Through it they manage their affairs and anchor themselves to their immediate social circle: their friends, partners and families. With the help of mobile communication young people build their own social networks and simultaneously redefine boundaries in their relationships with parents and partners. For adolescents, text messaging is a quiet and simple way to maintain their social network without their parents’ knowledge.

The findings of the study conducted by Donna Reid and Fraser Reid, University of Plymouth, “Insights into the Social and Psychological Effects of SMS Text

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91 Ibid.

92 Ibid.
Messaging”, show that the increasingly widespread use of text-messaging has led to the questioning of the social and psychological effects of this novel communication medium. A selection of findings from an online questionnaire that was developed by the author to answer this pertinent question is presented. McKenna’s recent work on the way the Internet can help some people develop relationships is drawn upon and taken a step further by exploring the differences between those who prefer texting (‘Texters’) and those who prefer talking on their mobiles (‘Talkers’). A large sample of 982 respondents completed the questionnaire. Results showed there was a clear distinction between Texters and Talkers in the way they used their mobiles and their underlying motivations.93

The key finding to emerge in the preliminary analyses was that Texters seemed to form close knit ‘text circles’ with their own social ecology, interconnecting with a close group of friends in perpetual text contact. Compared to Talkers, Texters were found to be more lonely and socially anxious, and more likely to disclose their ‘real-self’ through text than via face-to-face or voice call exchanges. Structural equation modelling produced a model showing that where respondents located their real-self and whether they were a Texter or a Talker mediated between the loneliness and social anxiety measures and the impact of these on relational outcomes, in line with McKenna’s theoretical framework. Thus it appears that there is something special about texting that allows some people to translate their loneliness and/or social anxiety into productive relationships whilst for others the mobile does not afford the same effect. Applications and explorations for future research are discussed.94

Kate Fox, in her interesting research titled, “Evolution, Alienation and Gossip-The role of mobile telecommunications in the 21st century”, states that Gossip is not a trivial pastime: it is essential to human social, psychological and even physical well-being. The mobile phone, by facilitating therapeutic gossip in an alienating and

93 Ibid.

fragmented modern world, has become a vital 'social lifeline', helping people to re-create the more natural communication patterns of pre-industrial times. The key findings of the study are given below.  

Gossip is the human equivalent of 'social grooming' among primates, which has been shown to stimulate production of endorphins, relieving stress and boosting the immune system. Two-thirds of all human conversation is gossip, because this 'vocal grooming' is essential to the social, psychological and physical well-being of human beings. Mobiles facilitate gossip. Mobiles have increased and enhanced this vital therapeutic activity, by allowing us to gossip anytime, anyplace, anywhere and to text as well as talk. Mobile gossip is an effective and important new stress-buster.

The space-age technology of mobile phones has allowed us to return to the more natural and humane communication patterns of pre-industrial society, when we lived in small, stable communities, and enjoyed frequent 'grooming talk' with a tightly integrated social network. In the fast-paced modern world, we had become severely restricted in both the quantity and quality of communication with our social network. Mobile gossip restores our sense of connection and community, and provides an antidote to the pressures and alienation of modern life. Mobiles are a 'social lifeline' in a fragmented and isolating world.

Men gossip as much as women. The study found that men gossip at least as much as women, especially on their mobiles. Thirty-three percent of men indulge in mobile gossip every day or almost every day, compared with twenty-six percent of women. Men gossip for just as long and about the same subjects as women, but tend to talk more about themselves. The study did find a sex difference in 'gossip partners', with men more likely to gossip with work colleagues, partners and female friends, while women gossip more with same-sex friends and family. Male and female gossip also

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96 Ibid.

97 Ibid.
sounds different, as women use more animated tones, more detail and more feedback.  

The **Australian Mobile Telecommunications Associations** tries to provide an evidence-based understanding of the social impact of the mobile phone on work/life balance. The study presents data collected March to May 2007 from a sample of 1358 individuals from 845 on-line households. Key Findings of the study are given below. 

The lowest mobile phone use is found among those aged 60 years or more, but the mobile phone is so universally diffused that use is unaffected by income levels and occupation. The majority of users are subscribers and prepaid use is concentrated among those under 25 years. Around a quarter of managers and associate professionals have their bills paid by their employer, whereas in other occupations around 10% or less benefit from employer support. Cost is by far the major reason given for choice of handset, while there is no single factor which explains the choice of service provider. ‘Convenience’ of the mobile phone is the reason most frequently given for choosing to talk on a mobile rather than a landline. ‘Cost’ is a major reason for preferring to talk using a landline rather than a mobile. 

There is a very high awareness of 3G (86% of males and 75% of females). But 61% of respondents indicate that they do not access internet services via their mobile phone. The lag in take-up is a topic for further research. Logs of actual calls made and SMS texts sent show that the predominant use of the mobile is for contacting family and friends, with work-related reasons far less important. Men make more calls for business purposes, while women use the mobile for social connectivity. Typically mobile phone users call relatively infrequently, with 28% making calls less than once

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98 Ibid.

99 "The Impact of the Mobile Phone on Work/Life Balance Preliminary Report", 

100 Ibid.
a day. Calls cluster by time of day, according to purpose. Most work-related calls are made in standard working hours. The rate of calls to family and friends are low in working hours but high at the end of school hours and in the evening.\textsuperscript{101}

According to this study, the apparently chief purposes for which mobiles are used are talking and messaging. Other uses, including data transmission, are at this point minor. Asynchronous communication practices, such as turning off your mobile to avoid being disturbed, are common techniques. Ninety per cent of the respondents ‘normally’ switch off their phone in the cinema, two-thirds switch off their phone at work meetings, and almost half turn off their phones in restaurants. Women are more reluctant than men to take their mobile phone on holiday ‘to talk to work colleagues’. A third of workers say that it would be difficult to do their job properly without their mobile. This is particularly the case for men.\textsuperscript{102}

Half of employed respondents think that mobiles increase their workload, for 42% the effect is neutral, and a few (9%) think mobiles reduce their workload. This is offset by productivity gains. Over half (55%) of employed respondents indicate that job-related mobile calls increase their productivity. Over two-thirds of the respondents report that the mobile phone is an important medium for maintaining kinship ties, especially for women. The mobile is a device well suited to maintaining intimate relationships at a geographical distance. More than half of the employed respondents believe that the mobile helps them to balance their family and working lives. Very few report that the mobile phone has a negative impact on their work-life balance. The mobile phone is an indispensable part of the everyday life of Australians. More than 90% report that their lives could not ‘proceed as normal’ if they were suddenly without their mobile phone. Carrying a mobile phone makes most people (75%) feel more secure.\textsuperscript{103}

When asked about the impact of the mobile phone on their sense of time pressure, 39% report that the mobile reduces time pressure, while 33% report it increases pressure. Most people (59%) find that the mobile phone does not affect their level of

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{103} Ibid.
stress. Of those who report that it has some impact, respondents are three times more likely to say that it reduces their stress level. Contrary to fears about the intrusive character of the mobile phone on leisure, few respondents (4%) report that the mobile reduces the quality of their leisure time.\textsuperscript{104}

2.4. Studies on the Cultural Impact of Mobile Phones

Mobile Phones, like any other technological innovations, gets interwoven with the cultural fabric of the society as time rolls by. The findings of various studies point out that the cultural specificities have a great say in the way people select, purchase and use mobile phones and the use of mobile phones in turn bring about certain irreversible changes in the culture of a given society. Given below are few studies on the cultural impact of mobile phones.

\textbf{Fiona Brady, Laurel Evelyn Dyson} and \textbf{Tina Asela}, conducted a study on “Indigenous Adoption of Mobile Phones and Oral Culture”, in Australia. The findings point to the fact that the aural and graphical characteristics of mobile technology and multimedia, in particular, speak to strengths in Indigenous oral and graphical culture.\textsuperscript{105} Yet, despite many successful ICT implementations across the globe, there still remain many questions about Indigenous ICT access and adoption. In order to throw light on some of these issues, this paper examines the adoption and use of mobile phones by Indigenous people and how this fits with Indigenous culture. Specifically, the research presents a preliminary study of mobile phone adoption on a remote island in the Torres Strait with a special focus on Indigenous orality. The study indicates a number of very interesting issues, including an unexpected use of text messaging on mobile phones, as well as phone calls and text messages in the local language \textit{Kala Kawa Ya (KKY)}. We tentatively conclude that not only must ICT

\footnotesize\textsuperscript{104} Ibid.

\footnotesize\textsuperscript{105} Fiona Brady, Laurel Evelyn Dyson and Tina Asela, conducted a study on “Indigenous Adoption of Mobile Phones and Oral Culture”, \url{http://www-staff.it.uts.edu.au/~laurel/Publications/IndigenousAdoptionOfMobilePhones&OralCulture.pdf}, accessed January 15, 2012.
fit with cultural strengths such as orality but that it must also match key areas of high motivation, such as communication with family.

This case study of one of the remotest Indigenous communities in Australia has shown that Indigenous people are enthusiastic adopters of modern technology in certain circumstances. The study indicates that two factors are probably necessary for technology adoption: The technology must play to the inherent strengths of the culture, for example the oral tradition; and the technology must evoke a high degree of motivation. In the community under study, the use of mobile phones fit with the strong oral tradition of the Islanders and motivation is created by fulfilling obligations to family and friends, such as by communication and keeping in contact. Like all Torres Strait Island communities, the diaspora of children leaving the island to attend school or adults leaving to gain employment has created a strong motivation by increasing the need for a communications technology to keep in contact. This need would be common across the Strait and result in similar patterns of mobile phone adoption and use.106

A most unexpected finding of the study is the degree to which mobile phones are being used, not just for voice calls, but also for text messages. The free use that island people make of text messages (up to 100 per day in the study) suggests that this written form of communication may has many of the qualities of speech, i.e. of chat rooms and discussion boards. The authors therefore propose that texting may represent another form of “tertiary orality” to use December’s (1993) term. Further research will be needed to verify this claim. Text messages have one extremely interesting outcome: much of the texting occurs in KKY. This language has rarely been expressed before in written form: the dictionary, a primary school traditional song book, the recently created hymn books and some of the Bible stories are virtually all the public texts in KKY. Texting has opened the door for new creativity in the written form of this language. The use of KKY messages may represent resurgence in this language, spoken by members of three small island communities and previously in decline. This finding also has important implications for the teaching and revival of

106 Ibid.
endangered Indigenous languages: texting may prove a useful and attractive learning method for the younger generation.  

Naomi S. Baron and Elise M. Campbell in their study, “Talking Takes Too Long: Gender and Cultural Patterns in Mobile Telephony”, reports on gender patterns identified in a cross cultural study of mobile phone use by university students in Sweden, the US, Italy, Japan and Korea. Data were analyzed with respect to the purpose of communication, politeness issues, social manipulation and volume of use (along with user complaints about dependency and reachability). Results indicated a number of gendered usage and attitudinal patterns. However, in some cases, cultural variables may prove more explanatory than gender.  

New technologies enable people to alter existing patterns of communication. In their time, the telegraph and the (landline) telephone redefined assumptions about how social relationships should be conducted. More recently, it was initially assumed that the Internet would equalize power relationships between genders. Yet technologies don’t automatically undo long-standing patterns of socialization. We have seen a number of ways in which traditional gendered language usage is perpetuated on mobile phones, particularly with regard to the purpose of communication, politeness considerations while in face-to-face interaction, and volume of one-to-one text communication. We have also observed novel ways in which both genders take advantages of their mobile phones’ affordances to manipulate social interaction with others. And we have seen the toll that heavy text messaging can take upon users. Gender is just one variable that comes into play in understanding how young adults use mobile phones. In a number of instances, culture may be the critical issue, as with Americans avoiding strangers by pretending to talk on their phones. Italians not using

\[107\] Ibid.  

their phones while sitting at dinner with their families, Koreans being especially heavy mobile phone users, or Japanese being least bothered by dependency or reachability. The study probed the sources of commonality and difference in the ways young adults use mobile phones. While the research has focused here on gender issues, it also noted the importance of considering cultural dimensions.

**Nigel Scott, Simon Batchelor, Jonathon Ridley** and **Britt Jorgensen**’s study on the “The Impact of Mobile Phones in Africa”, found that the demand for mobile phones in Africa in the last few years has been more than most people expected and continues to expand. Operators have traditionally target urban areas, but it is the demand from rural and low income areas that have exceeded all expectations. The use of phones has already become part of African culture. As urban markets become saturated, the next generation of phone users will be rural based, and they will be using mobile phones. Demand is driven by voice as opposed to data. Social uses such as keeping in touch with family and friends feature strongly. Benefits include a sense of wellbeing, improved income (e.g. arranging cash transfers from family members), and reduced risk (e.g. call for assistance).

There is a growing body of evidence of the indirect impact on the poor arising from improvements in the delivery of pro-poor services that can be achieved through mobile phone based applications (many based on SMS). In the future, voice telephony will converge with digital services, so mobile phones will enable access to a range of data based services. In the longer term, handheld devices will combine features of radio, television, camera, mini computer and phone. These will be even better suited to the culture of Africa’s poor, and will offer almost limitless opportunities for delivering services tailored to the needs of the poor. The challenge is to ensure the poor can access services, and that services are useful.111

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109 Ibid.


111 Ibid.
“The Behavior of Young People when Using Mobile Phones and its Impact on Thai Culture and Lifestyle: A Case Study of Kalasin Municipality in Kalasin Province”, by Prasan Kumjonmenkul was a qualitative research study throws light on the impact of mobile phones on Thai Culture. The sample consisted of secondary school students, vocational college students and undergraduate students in Kalasin Province. The aims of the research were: to study the telephone usage of young people in Kalasin municipality, to study the impact on Thai culture and lifestyle of telephone usage in Kalasin municipality and to find ways to prevent problems from mobile phone usage in Kalasin municipality. The research found that mobile phones are helpful in communicating quickly but some young people in Kalasin municipality do not understand the limitations of using mobile phones to communicate. A number of young people spend a lot of money on mobile phones and fail to economize.

They have high-class and expensive tastes but do not have enough money to fund them. As a result, many young people are forced to take loans to keep in with contemporary fashions and to keep pace with friends. The impact of this behavior causes people to become impatient, careless and hurried. Young people often display bad-manners by not knowing the appropriate time and place to use their mobile phones. Telephone addiction puts people’s ability to engage in interpersonal relationships at risk. Interaction by phone alone causes a high risk of miscommunication and misunderstanding by displacement of contextual body-language, gestures and even tones and pitches. Instead of using these key conversational tools, mobile phone users simply hear or send news to one another by listening to a receiver or reading a text message. It is therefore necessary to increase knowledge, understanding and awareness of the impact and problems arising from the use of mobile phones by providing a public relations campaign and training young people about communication tools. Young people must know the benefits and harm

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that may occur, which could be incorporated as a course of study in the school curriculums.\textsuperscript{113}

Avoiding this type of media to convey instructions and messages would also help to reduce the problems. The education in these matters should begin with the parental or foster family, who must advise caution. Families should highlight the dangers of excessive mobile phone usage and give instructions how to appropriately utilize the technology and reduce the harmful effects of mobile communication. Taking measures to reduce the behaviors that have directly negative effects on Thai culture and lifestyle is one way to decrease the current and inevitable future problems associated with the overuse of mobile phone communication among young people in Kalasin Province. These measures follow the outlines of the structural-functional theory, which dictate that youth is a critical element of society. When any problem occurs in the youth of society, that problem will have unavoidable consequences for the national social order.\textsuperscript{114}

The research carried out by Carolyn Wei and Beth E. Kolko, “Studying Mobile Phone Use in Context: Cultural, Political, and Economic Dimensions of Mobile Phone Use”, discusses the need for studying mobile phone use within the context of a society, with consideration of the cultural, political, and economic factors that influence phone use.\textsuperscript{115} Such contextual study is especially valuable in a culture that sharply differs from the industrial, predominantly Western perspective in which mobile phones and applications are developed. This paper presents a case study of mobile phone use in Uzbekistan, a Central Asian republic with a unique socio-political environment that is experiencing growing mobile phone use.

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{115} Carolyn Wei and Beth E. Kolko, “Studying Mobile Phone Use in Context: Cultural, Political, and Economic Dimensions of Mobile Phone Use”,

Studying the use of mobile phones in Uzbekistan with consideration to its broader social context suggests that unique patterns of mobile phone use exist. The mobile users of Uzbekistan seem to be adopting mobile phones in a culturally meaningful way. People are able to use the mobile phones as a technological extension of their natural behavior. For instance, parents worry about their children's safety, and they are able to use mobile phones to watch over them even when they are out of sight. The relatively conservative and minimal use of the mobile phone in public may be a reflection of the political environment. In a society where it may be safest not to attract the attention of the police or to share too much information in a public area, mobile phone owners may be deliberately judicious about their use. The economics of mobile phones also affect use.\footnote{Ibid.}

The cost of the phone itself may cause some owners to treat the phone with care and to be more aware of how it works since it is an investment. The investment aspect may also lead owners to see the phone as a necessary tool rather than a frivolous toy. The expense of mobile phone calls themselves may help explain the relatively brief mobile calls made in public as well as economical uses of the phone such as sending a text message instead of making a long-distance call.\footnote{Ibid.}

At these early moments of adoption, it seems that mobiles have already started to transform Uzbek society in that people are becoming dependent on their phones although they have regular access to land lines, similar to the ubiquity of mobiles in highly wired societies. The enthusiastic acceptance of the benefits of mobile phones by users may echo the accolades that often accompany the introduction of mobile technology to previously unconnected regions of the world. It enriches the mobile phone industry's understanding of the diversity of its users. It also highlights the differences in mobile phone use that can exist in various parts of the world. To more effectively understand the role of mobile phones in a society, it is necessary to study them in the entire cultural context. With a more complete understanding of the cultural, political, and economic heritage of a society, researchers and designers can
strengthen their products and design recommendations and improve interfaces and technologies for more kinds of people.  

A study conducted by **Scott W. Campbell**, “Perceptions of Mobile Phone Use in Public Settings: A Cross-Cultural Comparison”, entails a cross-cultural comparison of perceptions of mobile phone use in select public settings, including a movie theatre, restaurant, bus, grocery store, classroom, and sidewalk. A sample of participants from the U.S. Mainland, Hawaii, Japan, Taiwan, and Sweden was surveyed for social acceptability assessments of talking on a mobile phone in each of these locations. As hypothesized, settings involving collective attention were considered least acceptable for talking on a mobile phone. Results also revealed numerous cultural similarities and differences. Taiwanese participants tended to report more tolerance for mobile phone use in a theater, restaurant, and classroom than did participants from the other cultural groupings. Japanese participants also tended to be more tolerant of mobile phone use in a classroom, but less tolerant of use on a sidewalk and on a bus than were the other participants.  

The study examined perceptions of mobile phone use in select public settings (theatre, restaurant, bus, store, classroom, and sidewalk) among individuals from five distinct cultural groupings (U.S. Mainland, Hawaii, Japan, Taiwan, Sweden). Drawing from theoretical principles of Erving Goffman, the study first hypothesized that more fully-focused settings (i.e., those involving more collective levels of involvement) would be regarded as less acceptable locations for talking on a mobile phone than settings that support more individualized levels of focus. Supporting the hypothesis, results showed that participants, when examined overall, rated the fully-focused settings of movie theatre and classroom significantly and substantially lower than all other settings.  

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118 Ibid.  
120 Ibid.
Furthermore, the multi-focused settings of bus, store, and sidewalk all received means of 3.30, 3.69, and 3.83 respectively, which are significantly and substantially higher than the mean for the setting of restaurant, which lies somewhere between the two extremes for focus. In short, the results reveal a discernable pattern that is consistent with the hypotheses. Multi-focused settings (bus, store, sidewalk) received average acceptability ratings well above three on a five point scale, while restaurant averaged a score in the mid-two range, and the fully-focused settings (theatre, classroom) were rated much lower in the one range. All comparisons across these three categories were statistically significant, and the effects were sizeable. Findings for the research question point to distinctive cultural trends. Taiwanese participants tended to report more tolerance for mobile phone use in a theatre, restaurant, and classroom than did participants from the other cultural groupings. Japanese participants also tended to be more tolerant of mobile phone use in a classroom, but less tolerant of use on a sidewalk and, especially, on a bus than were the other participants.121

2.5. Studies on Media convergence

Media convergence has enabled a basic device like a mobile phone, the capacity to become an all-in-one telecommunications, media and computer handheld machine. Mobile phone convergence is fusing together two of the most powerful consumer technologies in history – the interactivity and depth of the Internet with the convenience and freedom of mobile telephony. 3G takes the most compelling aspect of each of these platforms and brings them together in one device. The impacts of this technology on society are varied in both positive and negative outlooks. The studies on Media convergence is given below.

The aim of the study, “Can Mobile Internet Help Alleviate Social Exclusion in Developing Countries?”, by Wallace Chigona, Darry Beukes, Junaid Vally and Maureen Tanner was to explore the role mobile Internet may play towards alleviating social exclusion on a developing country context.122 Data for the study was

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121 Ibid.

gathered using semi-structured interviews with socially excluded individuals and the data was analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings of the study show that usage of mobile internet amongst the socially excluded is low mainly because Internet-capable cell phones are still beyond the reach of the socially excluded and because of limited awareness of what mobile Internet is and what it can achieve. The study also shows that while mobile Internet has significant impact in addressing exclusion from social participation, its impact on economic as well political dimensions of exclusions is still limited.

It has been noted that meaningful awareness of the technology and what it can do is still limited. There is need therefore for stakeholders to work further in building awareness of the technology. It has also been noted that the use and hence the impact of mobile Internet amongst the socially excluded may still be limited because the majority of people in that category cannot afford cell phones with Internet capabilities. The findings suggest that economically, mobile Internet delivers limited value to socially excluded individuals, largely because the cost savings experienced by the respondents is low. It does not seem as though mobile Internet has any effect on improving political participation. This is mainly attributable to the negative perception by respondents of government. The findings of the research suggest that mobile Internet has a significant role in strengthening social ties, with instant messaging applications proving very popular.\(^{123}\)

The initial perceptions of the outcomes of the study were that the biggest impact would be experienced in an economic manner by respondents. However, the data gathered suggests that this impact was only moderate. The outcomes regarding political interaction were largely in line with the expectations, in that there was very limited impact. The most significant impact of mobile Internet is in the social interaction. Based on experiences gained from this research, it can be said that there is scope for future research. Firstly, future studies could be conducted with larger sample sizes, thus helping in the generalization of the findings. Also, if possible a more representative sample of socially excluded individuals could be obtained while a similar study could be conducted in which the sample is drawn from individuals of

\(^{123}\) Ibid.
varying economic backgrounds. The responses could then be compared to validate the findings of this study. Demographics could potentially play a larger role in future studies, so emphasis could be placed on respondent demographics as a factor influencing mobile Internet usage.124

In their research, “The Impact of Cell Phone Use on Social Networking and Development among College Students”, Mikiyasu Hakoama and Shotaro Hakoyama, point out that Cell phones have become increasingly popular in recent years.125 While people of various ages find cell phones convenient and useful, younger generations tend to appreciate them more and be more dependent on them. Based on a survey conducted in a mid-size, Midwestern university, college students’ cell phone use was examined. The survey consisted of 44 questions that dealt with various aspects of cell phone use, such as cell phone ownerships, time spent for cell phone calls, monthly cell phone bills, communication networks, text messaging, and cell phone dependency. The survey results indicated that, of the 501 responses, 99% owned cell phones and nearly 90% of them have had cell phones for more than three years. The results also showed significant gender differences in several aspects of cell phone use.

“Mobile Social Networks and Social Practice: A Case Study of Dodgeball”, by Lee Humphreys, Department of Communication Arts, University of Wisconsin-Madison investigates Dodgeball, a mobile social network system (MSNS) that allows groups of friends to be accessed and engaged with from one's mobile phone.126 Dodgeball is a MSNS that seeks to facilitate social connection and coordination among friends in urban public spaces. The report is based on a year-long qualitative field study, reports on the social and behavioral norms of Dodgeball use. A comparison between social network sites and Dodgeball highlights some of the communicative differences of

124 Ibid.


mobile technology and the Internet. The findings of the study suggest that Dodgeball use can influence the way that informants experience public space and social relations therein. At times Dodgeball can facilitate the creation of third spaces, which are dynamic and itinerant forms of "third places". Additionally, exchanging messages through Dodgeball can lead to social molecularization, whereby active Dodgeball members experience and move through the city in a collective manner.