



Founder and Publisher:

Ural Federal University named after the first President of Russia Boris N. Yeltsin.
Address: 19 Mira street, Yekaterinburg, Russia, 620002

Journal contact information:

51 Lenin Avenue, room 240, Yekaterinburg, Russia, 620000

Phone: +7 (343) 389-9412

E-mail: editor@changing-sp.com

Web: <https://changing-sp.com>

The Journal is registered by the Federal Agency for Supervision in the Sphere of Telecommunication, Information Technologies and Mass Communication, Certificate of Registration: ПИ № ФС77–65509 from May 4, 2016

Aims and Scope:

Changing Societies & Personalities is an international, peer-reviewed quarterly journal, published in English by the Ural Federal University. *CS&P* examines how rapid societal-level changes are reshaping individual-level beliefs, motivations and values – and how these individual-level changes in turn are reshaping societies. The interplay of personality traits and sociocultural factors in defining motivation, deliberation, action and reflection of individuals requires a combination of theoretical and empirical knowledge. Since an interdisciplinary approach is needed to understand the causes and consequences of the contemporary world's changing socio-political institutions, moral values, and religious beliefs, the journal welcomes theoretical and empirical contributions from a wide range of perspectives in the context of value pluralism and social heterogeneity of (post)modern society.

Topics of interest include, but are not limited to

- value implications of interactions between socio-political transformations and personal self-identity;
- changes in value orientations, materialist and post-materialist values;
- moral reasoning and behavior;
- variability and continuity in the election of styles of moral regime and/or religious identity;
- the moral bases of political preferences and their elimination;
- social exclusion and inclusion;
- post-secular religious individualism;
- tolerance and merely “tolerating”: their meanings, varieties and fundamental bases;
- ideologies of gender and age as variables in political, moral, religious and social change;
- educational strategies as training for specific social competences;
- social and existential security.

The journal publishes original research articles, forum discussions, review articles and book reviews.

<https://changing-sp.com/ojs/index.php/csp/index>



Editor-in-Chief

Elena A. Stepanova Institute for Philosophy and Law, Ural Branch
of the Russian Academy of Sciences;
Ural Federal University, Russia

International Co-Editor

Ivan Strenski University of California, Riverside (UCR), USA

Editorial Board

Oksana V. Golovashina Ural Federal University, Russia – Executive Editor
Andrey S. Menshikov University of Central Asia – Deputy Editor
Natalia G. Popova Institute for Philosophy and Law, Ural Branch
of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Russia –
Associate Editor

Alexey N. Borbunov Ural Federal University, Russia – Sub-Editor/Web
Editor

Editorial Council

In alphabetical order:

H. E. Abdullah Abdul-Ali Al-Humaidan Zayed Higher Organization
for People of Determination, UAE

Eva Boštjančič University of Ljubljana, Slovenia
Radu Burlacu Université Pierre Mendès, France
Riccardo Campa Jagiellonian University, Poland
Juan Diez Nicolas Complutense University of Madrid, Spain
Marharyta Fabrykant Belarusian State University, Belarus
Martin van Gelderen University of Göttingen, Germany
John Horton Keele University, UK
Annika Hvithamar University of Copenhagen, Denmark
Ronald Inglehart (deceased) University of Michigan, USA
Fayruza S. Ismagilova Law Enforcement Academy
of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Tim Jensen University of Southern Denmark, DK
Maxim B. Khomyakov University of Central Asia
Gregory Simons Turība University, Riga, Latvia
Nikolay G. Skvortsov St. Petersburg State University, Russia
Kristina Stöckl University of Innsbruck, Austria
Abdulkader Tayob University of Cape Town, South Africa
Katya Tolstaya Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Netherlands
Elena G. Trubina University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, USA
Peter Wagner University of Barcelona, Spain

<https://changing-sp.com/ojs/index.php/csp/about/editorialTeam>



Special Issue: **Ethnic Identities in Virtual Space**

CONTENTS

Editorial

Ethnic Identities in Virtual Space
Svetlana Yu. Belorussova..... 5

Articles in the Special Section

Cyberfield: Theory, Methodology, and Practice
Svetlana Yu. Belorussova, Ksenya A. Maretina, Elizaveta A. Komova..... 11

**Social Media, Cultural Values, and Digital Citizenship:
A Study of Iranian Digital Natives**
*Sara Tabatabaei, Bella A. Bulgarova, Galina N. Trofimova,
Victor V. Barabash*..... 29

**The Fiesta and the Cerro. Rocksi Broadcasting
on Social Media From Xaamkējxp**
Elena Nava Morales 51

**Navigating Digital Borders: Seto Community in the Virtual
Territory of the VK Social Network**
Ksenya A. Maretina 67

Abkhaz and Abazin Communities in Cyberspace
Tamara G. Ayba..... 84

Articles

**Dynamics of “Conservative” and “Progressive” Narratives
in the Era of Digital Transformation in Political
Communications**
Konstantin F. Zavershinskiy, Alexander I. Koryushkin..... 101

**Phenomenon of Altruism: Current Youth Perceptions
From the Historical and Sociological Perspectives**
Natalya L. Antonova, Ilia E. Levchenko, Natalia G. Popova 120



Strategies for Forming the Image of Islam/Muslims in the Media Discourse

Tatyana S. Pronina, Varvara A. Slivkina 143

Unveiling Compensatory Mechanisms of Muslim Minority Groups in Hungary

Jhanghiz Syahrivar, Tamás Gyulavári, Chairy Chairy 168

Inclusive Urban Gateways: Towards Socially Just and Open Urban Systems

Mojtaba Valibeigi, Ayyoob Sharifi, Sakineh Maroofi, Sara Danay 193

Factors Contributing to the Relatively Low Gender Gap in Entrepreneurship in Russia

Edgar Demetrio Tovar-García 218

Cultural Dynamics in Social Commerce: An In-Depth Analysis of Consumer Behavior and Interaction Patterns

Fatemeh Nouri Dehnavi, Negar Sioofy Khoojine 242

Book review

Recent Developments in the Anthropology of Digital Media: Exploring the Influencer Phenomenon

Natalia A. Chernyaeva 275

Ethical Code 284

Instruction for Authors 288



EDITORIAL

Ethnic Identities in Virtual Space

Svetlana Yu. Belorussova

Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera) of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Saint Petersburg, Russia

Over the past quarter century, the cyber world has become a powerful transformative force that is increasingly permeating every facet of human life. Humanity, be it willingly or not, is adopting a new and previously unknown mode of existence, radically reshaping both the universe and humanity itself. However, the implications of this young phenomenon remain largely obscure. Cyberspace offers distinct advantages over the physical world, fostering the promptness of implementation of research projects, including those related to the issues of identity and ethnicity.

Research into the phenomenon of digital identity began in the 1980s with the proliferation of computers, the Internet, computer games, and various communication tools such as instant messaging and email services. Initially, researchers focused on exploring the potential benefits of the digital environment for humanity, both in terms of present-day and future scenarios. By the late 1990s, the analysis of network interactions had evolved into an independent area of academic inquiry. In 1998, Mark Poster introduced the concept of “virtual ethnicity” in the context of “the interplay of real and virtual elements in the construction of ethnic groups” (Poster, 1998).

The articles in this thematic issue of *Changing Societies & Personalities* explore the diversity of ethnic identities within virtual environments, employing new (or updated) methods of field ethnography and analytical ethnology in light of contemporary challenges and re-evaluation of current events. Cyberspace is an integral part of modern life, existing alongside and sometimes even replacing reality. It is becoming an essential, if not the principal, element in sustaining and shaping new forms of cyberethnicity. The recent global pandemic has revealed the significance of virtuality, particularly for ethnic and religious communities, which have found their unique ways to manifest identity. On the one hand, virtual identity appears to be an innovation that is affecting and altering the identity of ethnic groups. On the other hand, the use of modern technology to

represent ethnicity is a logical continuation of the constructivist concept of “imagined communities.” In this sense, cyberethnicity functions as a tradition. One of the key tasks is to determine the balance between tradition and innovation in the projection of virtual identity (Golovnev et al., 2021).

The already intricate system of identities is being dynamically multiplied in web projections. Cyberspace not only reflects the offline picture of ethnicity and religiosity, but also generates a new cyberidentity whose potential cannot be fully grasped yet. However, the tools of cyberethnography make its study possible. The Internet offers boundless opportunities for cyberspace development, from massive databases of scientific data to dynamic interactivity, creating new motives, tasks, contexts, and object–subject communication fields with their digital natives—bloggers, hackers, network groups, and other cyber communities.

Virtual communication via social networking services is a powerful tool for overcoming geographical remoteness, which is particularly important for dispersed ethnic groups. At present, new practices and technologies of virtual communication among ethnic communities and the formation of cyberethnicities is attracting an increased interest of ethnographers and anthropologists. Ethnographic research is not limited to working with a computer or a gadget; rather, it implies physical observation of how virtual life is embedded in everyday reality. Whenever possible, the authors study actual (offline) and virtual (online) ethnicity in their interconnection and disconnection through the experiences of particular individuals and communities. Field research involves a combination of conventional methods of participant observation and interviewing and the approbation of cyberethnography techniques, such as Internet communication, tests, and content analyses of online discourse for a comparative study of real and virtual manifestations of ethnicity.

This thematic issue is mainly devoted to the ethnicity of Indigenous peoples. The article by Svetlana Yu. Belorussova, Ksenya A. Maretina, and Elizaveta A. Komova analyzes a methodology for conducting cyberfield research among ethnic groups of Russia. Elena Nava Morales explores Rocksí broadcasting, Ksenya A. Maretina addresses the virtual ethnicity of the Seto people, and Tamara G. Ayba investigates the digitalization of the Abaza identity. These thematic perspectives are highly relevant, because Indigenous communities have their plans and visions for digital technology. Ethnic groups implement new opportunities through digital tools and networks, including ethnoprojects that can significantly update ethnocultural resources and trends. In the recent past, ideological concepts of states were aimed at suppressing the expression of ethnicity (the “melting pot” theory in the United States and *Homo Sovieticus* in the USSR).

However, ethnicity has not disappeared or “melted down,” but has rather acquired new forms of expression and vectors of development, including the Internet environment. Moreover, cyberethnicity is gradually gaining the potential of an independent phenomenon, adequate to the present-day and future realities, including current events, such as wars and revolutions, among others. At the same time, cyberspace has an advantage over physical reality in terms of the promptness of projects, including ethnic identity. Studies conducted in previous years have

confirmed that smaller communities and diasporas show the most significant Internet activity (Belorussova, 2022; Golovnev et al., 2021). For these communities, cyber interaction compensates for the deficit of real-life activities. Indeed, the Internet replaces one of the foundations of ethnicity, that is the unity of territory. At the same time, the virtual world is gradually becoming a repository of ethnocultural heritage and a forum for inter-ethnic dialogue for all peoples. A desire to express and present one's own culture (language, traditions, history) in the Internet environment causes a kind of ethnic Renaissance (with elements of competition), contributing to the global spread of the fashion for "ethno."

Indigenous/terrestrial/autochthonous peoples, living, as a rule, on the geographical periphery, are often referred to as "small" or "small-numbered." Although this identification may be accurate in some sense, it fails to give any adequate representation. Today, Indigenous minorities are no longer considered conservative, traditional communities; their ethnicity is not solely linked with their ancestral culture. The ethnic resource of Indigenous minorities consists in their high environmental, material, social, and spiritual technologies, rather than in their "primordially." The authors believe that the problems of Indigenous peoples need to be addressed in their full complexity, considering multiple aspects and factors in the context of global processes and contemporary trends.

This thematic issue sets out to investigate the impact that cyber technologies have on the life of Indigenous peoples. How does cyberreality merge with reality, and how does cyberethnicity become an integral part of modern ethnicity? How do the behavior and activity patterns change, and how does the local merge with the global? How are new authorities born and mental boundaries crumbling? Our analysis of the contradictory phenomenon of virtual ethnicity is, in essence, an attempt to understand whether virtual ethnicity is a simulacrum or ethnic Renaissance. Of particular interest is the combination of tradition and innovation in ethnoprojects, including virtual ones. There is a growing number of examples and situations where tradition bearers assess innovation as fake, and in this sense, the direction, conventionally referred to as "ethno-fakelogy," is acquiring significance.

This thematic issue includes five articles. In the ARTICLE *Cyberfield: Theory, Methodology, and Practice*, Svetlana Yu. Belorussova, Ksenya A. Maretina, and Elizaveta A. Komova report that the study of digital identity began in the late 1980s with the spread of computers, the Internet, computer games, and various online communication tools. In more than 35 years, scholars have produced numerous valuable papers on digital anthropology and ethnography. Nevertheless, given the high speed of contemporary changes, researchers need to constantly update their techniques, to keep up with the emerging new ways of communication. The authors continue the research discourse regarding the methodology of cyberfield work, with its specifics and complexities. Special attention is drawn to the study of ethnicity online. Today, the virtual environment is offering a wide range of research opportunities, including application of qualitative and quantitative methods, conduction of surveys, and compilation of databases. Web analysis simplifies work in physical space, saving labor and financial resources. At the same time, the study of virtuality in recent years

seems to have attached a new meaning to the concept of real interaction. It turns out that the “digital” and “physical” worlds are difficult to separate—it is their combination that enables full-fledged ethnographic research with its specifics, details, and contexts.

The ARTICLE *Social Media, Cultural Values, and Digital Citizenship: A Study of Iranian Digital Natives* by Sara Tabatabaei, Bella A. Bulgarova, Galina N. Trofimova, and Victor V. Barabash examines the influence of social media engagement on cultural values among Iranian digital natives. A quantitative survey was conducted with 384 participants using a random online sampling method. The theoretical framework is based on Goffman's dramaturgical model theory and Rogers' diffusion theory. The findings reveal a significant negative correlation between the frequency of social media usage and adherence to cultural values, indicating that excessive use of social media may erode national cultural values and promote individualistic tendencies. Conversely, engagement with content that aligns with Iranian cultural values positively correlates with adherence to these values, underscoring the potential for social media to strengthen cultural values and preserve cultural heritage. This study highlights that social media engagement can have both positive and negative effects on cultural values, depending on the nature of such engagement. When used thoughtfully, social media can aid in the preservation and dissemination of cultural values. However, it also poses risks, including cyber vandalism and the degradation of cultural values. In conclusion, fostering media literacy for responsible digital citizenship is crucial for leveraging the potential of social media in preserving and promoting cultural values. This approach can help create a healthier, culturally aware digital environment that protects cultural heritage.

Elena Nava Morales, in her ARTICLE *The Fiesta and the Cerro: Rocksí Broadcasting on Social Media From Xaamkējxp*, presents the case of a young woman, Rocksí, who works with social media and has a strong influence in her region. She lives in Xaamkējxp, Oaxaca, in the southwest state of Mexico. Her work shows both the religious costumes and the politics of the communities through live transmissions on her Facebook¹ and YouTube² profiles. In 2024, she has transmitted several celebrations in Xaamkējxp related to religious celebrations because she was invited to help a family that had a *comisionados de festejo cargo*. Rocksí filmed various activities illustrating the importance of ethnic religious practices in the community and the strength and vitality of the religious and political cargos. In the text, the author delves deeper into the topic through ethnographic description.

The ARTICLE *Navigating Digital Borders: Seto Community in the Virtual Territory of the VK Social Network* by Ksenya A. Maretina examines the digital geography of the virtual Seto community in the VK social network (also known as VKontakte),³ focusing on how dispersed Seto people in Russia and Estonia use digital spaces to communicate, as well as express, preserve, and promote their cultural

¹ Facebook™ is a trademark of Facebook Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. По решению Роскомнадзора, социальная сеть Facebook в России признана экстремистской организацией и заблокирована.

² YouTube™ is a trademark of Google Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries.

³ VK (short for its original name VKontakte) is a Russian online social media and social networking service. <https://vk.com> VK™ is a trademark of VK.com Ltd.

identity. By applying a multi-sited ethnographic methodology, the research involves both online explorations and offline semi-structured interviews conducted in the Pechory District. Using the network and territory approaches to digital ethnography, the study highlights how the VK serves as a digital territory where Setos, divided by distances and physical borders, connect, share cultural practices, and foster the sense of community. Special attention is given to the Seto traditions of *leelo* polyphonic singing and festive costumes, both of which serve as vital markers of ethnic identity in this digital landscape. Through content analysis of Seto personal profiles and public pages, the research reveals how social networks help maintain connections and how digital geographies are constantly shaped and reshaped by cultural exchanges. This study underscores the adaptability of online spaces in sustaining fragmented ethnic communities across physical distances.

Tamara G. Ayba in her ARTICLE *Abkhaz and Abaza Communities in Cyberspace* investigates strategies implemented by two related peoples, Abkhazians and Abazins (Abazas), to preserve ethnic culture, using virtual space as a tool to sustain traditional practices. Most of these two related peoples reside outside their historical homeland, which makes the study of virtual communications among the Abaza people, both in Russia and abroad, highly relevant. The Abkhazians and Abazas living abroad demonstrate their unity with historical homeland and their involvement with traditions through photo and video recordings of traditional holiday celebrations shared online. Online sharing serves as an indication of being an integral part of their people despite being remote geographically. For the Abazins, a small Indigenous people settled in Russia, photo and video recordings of reconstructed rituals are important for the popularization and revival of traditional culture. The author carried out a content analysis of ethno-characteristic, linguistic, local, and extra-territorial communities in social networking sites, such as VK, Odnoklassniki⁴, Telegram⁵, Instagram⁶, and Facebook⁷. This study outlines the main trends that have developed in cyberspace for the Abkhazians and Abazas representatives seeking to preserve their traditional culture. In addition, the interaction between classical Islam and traditional beliefs, which are integral parts of ethnic cultures of these two peoples, is discussed.

The articles in this thematic issue demonstrate a high adaptability of ethnic communities to the realities of modern life. On the one hand, they actively participate in digital processes; on the other, the real world remains a true pillar of their identity. In this regard, traditional values act not as archaic but as time-tested systems adaptive to modern technological changes. We hope that this thematic issue sheds light on new perspectives of ethnic identity and new research methods for their comprehensive analysis.

⁴ Odnoklassniki is a Russian social network owned by VK. <https://ok.ru>

⁵ Telegram™ is a trademark of Telegram Group Inc., its operational center is based in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates.

⁶ Instagram™ is a trademark of Instagram Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. По решению Роскомнадзора, социальная сеть Instagram полностью заблокирована в России как экстремистская организация.

⁷ Facebook™ is a trademark of Facebook Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. По решению Роскомнадзора, социальная сеть Facebook в России признана экстремистской организацией и заблокирована.

References

Belorussova, S. Yu. (2022). Korennye malochislennye narody Rossii: Virtual'naia etnichnost' i setevye opyty [Indigenous small-numbered peoples of Russia: Virtual ethnicity and network experiences]. *Etnografia*, 4, 84–111. [https://doi.org/10.31250/2618-8600-2022-4\(18\)-84-111](https://doi.org/10.31250/2618-8600-2022-4(18)-84-111)

Golovnev, A. V., Belorussova, S. Yu., & Kisser, T. S. (2021). *Virtual'naia etnichnost' i kiberetnografiia* [Virtual ethnicity and cyberethnography]. MAE RAS.

Poster, M. (1998). Virtual ethnicity: Tribal identity in an age of global communications. In S. G. Jones (Ed.), *Cybersociety 2.0: Revisiting computer-mediated communication and community* (pp. 184–211). SAGE. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452243689.n7>



ARTICLE IN THE SPECIAL SECTION

Cyberfield: Theory, Methodology, and Practice

Svetlana Yu. Belorussova, Ksenya A. Maretina, Elizaveta A. Komova

Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera) of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Saint Petersburg, Russia

ABSTRACT

The study of digital identity began in the late 1980s with the rise of computers, the Internet, video games, and online communication tools. Over the past 35 years, digital anthropology and ethnography have provided valuable insights into virtual interactions. However, due to rapid technological advancements, researchers must continually update their methodologies to stay aligned with new trends in online communication. This study seeks to explore and systematize theories, methodologies, and practices related to the cyberfield, offering a comprehensive understanding of current research in digital ethnography. Additionally, it introduces an alternative methodology for analyzing the cyberfield, emphasizing its advantages in capturing the complexities of online spaces. The methodological principles outlined in this article are illustrated through examples from the authors' own study of the ethnic identity of minor Indigenous peoples in Russia in the online environment. Today, virtual spaces offer various research opportunities, including qualitative and quantitative methods, surveys, and database creation, enhancing data collection. Web analysis has simplified fieldwork by reducing the need for physical presence, saving time and resources. However, recent developments suggest that real-world interaction remains crucial. The growing intersection of the “digital” and “physical” fields highlights the importance of integrating both contexts in ethnographic research for a more nuanced understanding of virtual and real-world experiences.

KEYWORDS

virtual ethnicity, cyberfield ethnography, digital ethnography, Internet, Indigenous peoples, ethnicity, identity

Received 1 November 2024

Accepted 20 February 2025

Published online 30 April 2025

© 2025 Svetlana Yu. Belorussova,

Ksenya A. Maretina, Elizaveta A. Komova

svetlana-90@yandex.ru, maretina@kunstkamera.ru,

elizavetaf841@gmail.com

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We are grateful to our research team for their help and participation in the study, especially to A. V. Golovnev for methodological guidance and ideological inspiration, U. D. Kukanova for the work on quantitative data collection and compilation of the information base, and A. A. Siuziumov for spatial data analysis and map development.

Introduction

The study of digital identity began in the late 1980s with the spread of computers, the Internet, video games, and various communication tools: chat rooms, messengers, and online newsletters. Initially, scholars focused on analyzing the Web's potential, exploring how the digital environment could benefit humanity both in the present and future. By the end of the 1990s, analyses of Web interaction became a separate phenomenon in the research discourse. In 1998, Mark Poster introduced the concept of "virtual ethnicity" to describe how real and virtual elements interact in shaping ethnic groups (Poster, 1998). By then, traditional ethnography was a well-established field, rooted in extensive fieldwork, but the rise of digital spaces presented scholars with a new challenge: studying identity in an online environment. Should traditional ethnographic methods be applied to such work? If so, how should they be adapted? For over 25 years, scholars have advanced digital anthropology and ethnography; however, the rapid evolution of online interaction demands that researchers should constantly update their toolkit to keep pace with new trends and communication methods.

A group of researchers from Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera) of the Russian Academy of Sciences has been engaged in research in the field of digital ethnography for several years, which resulted in the monograph *Virtual'naia Etnichnost' i Kiberetnografiia* [Virtual Ethnicity and Cyberethnography] (Golovnev et al., 2021). As the digital environment continues to evolve, this study aims to explore changes in the virtual field, examine and systematize existing theories, methodologies, and practices related to the cyberfield, and propose an alternative approach to cyberfield analysis, highlighting its advantages. In doing so, it builds on and contributes to the ongoing discourse on the study of virtual ethnicity.

This study draws heavily on research into the ethnic identity of minor Indigenous peoples of Russia, including other ethnic groups such as the Tatars and Kryashens. The research was conducted through a combination of physical and virtual observation. Building on long-term fieldwork in the territories of these Indigenous peoples, the authors have more recently focused on observing the digitalization of their ethnic culture.

For this study, we prepared a questionnaire to gather feedback from representatives of minor Indigenous peoples on their participation in online research. A total of 93 people participated, with 67% women and 33% men, mostly from the Shapsugs, Nagaybaks, Khanty, Besermyan, Tubalars, Kumandins, and other groups.

The article is divided into three parts. The first part presents research case studies and key directions in online identity studies. The second part outlines our experience

studying virtual ethnicity and introduces methods for both qualitative and quantitative analysis. In the third part, we analyze ethnic community members' feedback on their participation in online research, share our principles for working in digital environments shaped by our experiences with minor Indigenous peoples of Russia, and assess the advantages and disadvantages of the cyberfield.

Field and Cyberfield: Illusions and Dilemmas

In 1993, Gary Alan Fine published the article "Ten Lies of Ethnography: Moral Dilemmas of Field Research," in which he explores ten illusions related to the ethical and technical challenges of ethnographic fieldwork. Fine categorizes them into three types: challenges to the ethnographer's "classical virtues" (sympathy, openness, and honor toward informants), challenges to technical skills (precision, observation, and passiveness), and conventions surrounding the presentation of research results (sincerity, chastity, and impartiality). From Fine's perspective, these illusions are inevitable, as perfection is unattainable, though it is crucial to recognize and understand them so as to avoid taking them for granted (Fine, 1993, pp. 268–269).

Almost 30 years after the publication of Fine's article, digital ethnographer Gabriele de Seta posed a similar question about the "lies" that cyberfield methods are fraught with. In his article "Three Lies of Digital Ethnography," the researcher examines the professional illusions that accompany the work of the digital ethnographer. These three "lies" are conveyed through three archetypal figures: the "networked field-weaver", the "eager participant-lurker", and the "expert fabricator." According to de Seta, these three illusory figures "embody discursive strategies, performative masks, and illusory identities that I regularly confront in my thinking, speaking, and writing about my own research work" (de Seta, 2020, p. 80).

De Seta describes the concept of the networked field-weaver as conducting research within one area of the Internet, which often opens up a wide range of potential interlocutors, unexplored communities, and entirely new categories of data. Under time and funding constraints, such situations of data abundance often involve pruning new information "offshoots," refusing offers of further socialization and withholding information beyond the scope of the research project for the sake of its timely completion (de Seta, 2020, p. 84).

De Seta notes that recent research on the diversity of participation modes in digital media platforms has moved beyond the simple distinction between active participation and lurking. He highlights the need to consider various forms of participation in both online and offline contexts, expanding the concept to include activities like browsing, clicking on links, navigating between platforms, and spending time with users in their daily lives, in addition to observing online activity (de Seta, 2020, p. 86). De Seta argues that beyond the false choice between covert observation and active participation, the question of the form of participation should become one of the central issues of digital ethnography, rather than a purely methodological choice (de Seta, 2020, p. 88).

The third "lie" of digital ethnography relates to representation, which is an inevitable component of the production of any kind of research output. Widespread

agreement on the ethics of digital media research includes informing participants of professional activities when collecting information in online communities, fully anonymizing or pseudonymizing personal data and identity markers, obtaining consent to publish private communications, acknowledging authorship, and more. Proceeding from these principles, de Seta argues that data fabrication is an inherent aspect of the digital ethnographer's work (de Seta, 2020, p. 92). Even if the research is based on extensive material, the resulting report created by the digital ethnographer ends up comprising a rather narrow set of data, often carefully edited, translated, coded, paraphrased, depersonalized, trimmed, selectively blurred, and prepared according to a multitude of ethical, argumentative, and aesthetic authorial decisions (de Seta, 2020, p. 90). In this context, fabrication becomes not just an ethical practice, but a way of utilizing the researcher's agency in the process, first by claiming and then by actively fulfilling their role as editor, interpreter, and, in effect, creator of a story (Markham, 2012, p. 345). Thus, the fabrication of research is inextricably linked to the idea of expertise. By claiming and assuming the role of editor, translator, and creator of compositions of events, identities, and texts, digital ethnographer implicitly establishes competence and awareness in a particular socio-technical context (de Seta, 2020, p. 91). Without diminishing the usefulness of fabrication as a representational strategy, de Seta emphasizes that the figure of the expert fabricator is, in fact, a tempting professional illusion (de Seta, 2020, p. 92).

Similar to G. A. Fine, the researcher concludes that the "networked field-weaver," essentializing one's participation in online communities, and "expert fabrication" are inevitable parts of ethnographic research in digital media (de Seta, 2020, p. 94). De Seta notes that his study is grounded in self-reflection, a technique central to qualitative research that has become almost cliché but remains valuable (p. 93). He ends with a quote from G. A. Fine: "These lies are not lies that we can choose, for the most part, not to tell; they are not claims that we can avoid entirely. We must suffer the reality that they are part of the methodology" (Fine, 1993, p. 290).

Thus, the cyberfield inherits from the ethnographic field a tendency to distortions and illusions, which, according to the above-mentioned authors, are inevitable in all qualitative research.

Methodology of Digital Ethnography

Researchers have varied views on the interactions between the physical world and virtual space. The following summarizes some key approaches and projects in digital ethnography, though it does not cover the full diversity of research methods for digital communities.

In his study of *Second Life*, a multiplayer online world, Tom Boellstorff applies traditional ethnographic methods, including participant observation, focus groups, surveys, and interviews, treating *Second Life* as a legitimate ethnographic field. He does not compare it to reality or consider interactions outside the virtual world (Boellstorff, 2015). Thus, Boellstorff's work mirrors traditional ethnographic research,

using field methods while deliberately isolating the virtual world from its real-world social, technological, and cultural contexts.

Another way was taken by British ethnographer Daniel Miller under his research project *Why We Post*. For ten years, Miller, together with scientists from different countries, had studied the mutual influence of people and the information environment. The aim of the project was to explore the impact of media technologies on everyday life, as well as the role of social networks in the formation of modern relationship practices. Miller and Slater's research in Trinidad in the late 1990s highlighted the need for long-term physical observation to study social media meaningfully (Miller & Slater, 2000, p. 5). To immerse themselves in the culture, project participants spent at least fifteen months in the communities, building contacts with locals (Miller et al., 2016).

According to British researcher Christine Hine, interactive media present both a challenge and a new opportunity for ethnography because they question the very notion of the place of interaction. Cyberspace should not be seen as a space divorced from any connections to "real life" and face-to-face interaction (Hine, 2000, p. 64). Hine argues that online practices must be understood in the context of reality, including social and cultural factors. The goal of studying virtuality is to identify the contexts shaped by the interaction of online and offline environments (Belorussova, 2021, pp. 132–133; Hine, 2000).

One of the long-standing sources of doubt and debate among digital ethnographers is the *application of human research ethics to qualitative studies of mediated interaction* (Abidin & de Seta, 2020, p. 10), which includes the heterogeneous and fluid environment of cyberspace. A. V. Golovnev notes that due to the rapid content updates and information obsolescence in cyberspace, digital ethnographers must adjust to the virtual speed, altering their research methods and perspectives (Golovnev, 2020). This aligns with the idea that the ethical framework of digital ethnography is always evolving, requiring researchers to adapt their guidelines for each cyberfield study while adhering to professional and socio-legal ethics (Gatson, 2012, p. 253).

Abidin and de Seta (2020) define self-reflection as the most widely recommended way to relieve epistemological anxieties, doubts, and ethical dilemmas in the cyberfield (p. 10). A reflexive attitude towards research choices is necessary for "finding practical and defensible balancing points between opposing tensions" (Baym, 2009, p. 173). According to Nancy Baym, a reflexive stance is itself an indicator of professionalism and contributes to a more flexible and detailed design of cyberfield ethnographic research (Baym, 2009).

A key issue in qualitative cyberfield studies is *the focus on textual materials*, such as posts, online articles, and correspondence, at the expense of online observation and interaction (Belorussova, 2021, p. 127). This emphasis on textual data was characteristic of the first wave of virtual space studies, which concentrated on email correspondence and newsgroups rather than online processes themselves (Androutsopoulos, 2008, pp. 1–3). The shift toward using the dense description method came later, largely driven by the further development of digital ethnography methodology.

Another problem inherent in digital ethnographic research is the *issue of participation in fieldwork and data collection*. It seems that the discussion concerning the choice of the format of presence in online communities continues the line of polemics characteristic of traditional ethnographic methodology. G. A. Fine, in his article on the challenges faced by ethnographers in terms of technical capabilities, highlights the following contradiction: on the one hand, the researcher should minimize their influence on the social phenomenon being studied; on the other hand, in order to study the phenomenon effectively, the researcher must become fully immersed in it (Fine, 1993, pp. 280–281).

Passive observation of an online community can address many research questions for digital ethnographers, but it cannot go on indefinitely. Waiting too long to introduce oneself risks making participants feel like they are being “spied” on (Snodgrass, 2014, p. 472). Instead of remaining passive, researchers often opt for active participation in the community. Some even create their own online venues and attract informants (Belorussova, 2021). In other words, researchers have various approaches available when deciding on the format of their presence and interaction in online spaces.

As shown, digital ethnography inherits some discussions and dilemmas, such as those related to field methodology, from traditional ethnography. Others, like the technical aspects of the Internet and rapid information transmission, are unique to the cyberfield. Reflexivity, awareness of the inevitable limitations and “lies” of ethnographic methodology, and the ability to adapt methods to the dynamic and diverse cyberfield environment are key to productive and high-quality research in cyberspace.

Interaction Techniques

Drawing on our own experience of cyberethnographic fieldwork, we identify four main online techniques:

- Direct contact with users;
- Observing the content of groups and personal pages;
- Conducting surveys;
- Quantitative data collection.

Direct Contact With Users

Direct contact is made by asking questions, communicating, and addressing users. It includes any online communication where the researcher is the initiator (or active participant). Communication can occur through face-to-face interaction, inquiries in themed groups and chat rooms, or by reaching out to users on the researcher’s personal page. An example of such communication is a survey conducted with a Nagaybak group about their population decline based on the 2020 census results (Figure 1). In January 2023, one of the authors of this study posted the following entry on their page on social media platform VK¹:

¹ VK (short for its original name VKontakte) is a Russian online social media and social networking service. <https://vk.com> VK™ is a trademark of VK.com Ltd.

Last week, the results of the 2020 census on the national composition of Russia's population came in. The number of minor Indigenous peoples seems to be good—the number is decreasing, but not by much, and some of them even increased a little.

But we are sincerely concerned about the Nagaybaks—their number has decreased by a third. Whereas the 2002 census showed 9,600 people, the 2010 census showed 8,148, now there are 5,719.

To be honest, I cannot fully explain such a sharp decline. In this regard, I turn to you, my Nagaybak friends. Why do you think the numbers have fallen so much? Write your answers in the comments or in a private message. As a researcher of the Nagaybaks and just a person who has the warmest feelings for your community, it is important for me to know. Let's think together. (Belorussova, 2023c; Trans. by Svetlana Belorussova, Ksenya Maretina, & Elizaveta Komova—S. B., K. M., & E. K.)

Figure 1

Screenshot of the Address to Users in the Network

На прошлой неделе пришли результаты переписи 2020 г. по национальному составу населения России. По коренным малочисленным народам вроде все неплохо - численность снижается, но не сильно, а у кое-кого даже чуть подросла. Но вот за нагайбаков у меня искреннее беспокойство - численность сократилась на треть. Если по переписи 2002 г. их было 9600 человек, 2010 г. - 8148, то сейчас 5719.

Если честно, не могу до конца объяснить столь резкое снижение. В связи с этим обращаюсь к вам, мои нагайбакские друзья. Как вы думаете почему численность так упала? (может быть, неудобство нынешней переписи, естественная смертность, ассимиляция или другие факторы). Пишите ответы в комментариях или личным сообщением. Мне как исследователю нагайбаков и просто человеку, который испытывает к вашему сообществу самые теплые чувства, важно это знать. Давайте подумаем вместе



91 16 10

3.9K

Note. Source: Belorussova, 2023b.

On this request, Nagaybaks and their sympathizers left 16 comments on VK and 20 on Odnoklassniki², another popular Russian social media platform, with three Nagaybaks expressing their opinions in personal messages. These responses can be broadly categorized into two sets: formal (external) factors and substantive (internal) factors. Overall, the census data did not elicit disappointment so much as reflection. For some, the survey prompted nostalgic memories of childhood and youth, thoughts about their parents and grandparents, and discussions of current issues and potential solutions (Belorussova, 2023a).

Another example of engagement occurred when we discovered that Ivan Georgievich Isaev (1861–1917), Lieutenant-General of the Orenburg Cossack Troops and Governor-General of Vilnius³, was from the village of Ostrolensky and was likely a Nagaybak. Knowing the Nagaybaks' interest in famous ancestors, we asked users on social media for any information about Isaev. The post generated significant response, with 65 comments in Odnoklassniki and 11 in VK, sparking an online discussion. Subsequently, some users contacted the researcher by phone to share their thoughts on Isaev, thus moving the discussion from an online to a “live” format. In the course of the discussion, commentators reported on the likelihood of their kinship and even “competed” for bloodlines (the Nagaybaks have several Isaev clans). In the end, further Internet research revealed a probable connection between General Isaev and Peter Isaev, a resident of Ostrolensky. Local Nagaybaks appreciated this: “Pyotr Ivanovich! Congratulations on such a noble relative.” However, the news about the hero ancestor turned out to be significant for all Nagaybaks, with one of them reacting emotionally:

When you hear familiar surnames, you feel good in your soul. No matter what they say about the Nagaybaks, I love my people. And it is especially pleasant to hear about the treasures of our people. There are a lot of Nagaybaks that we can be proud of. (Belorussova, 2018; Trans. by S. B., K. M., & E. K.)

The interaction methods described in the examples above help reach users interested in specific topics. These requests were posted on the researcher's personal page, with participants acting as “guests” who were invited to comment. This form of “indirect” interaction encourages freedom of expression and fosters active engagement from interested indigenous users.

Observation of Online Communities: Groups and Personal Pages

We examined the posts of ethnic community representatives on their personal pages and in social network groups. Observations were made without intervening, by following discussions, comments, feedback, and expressions.

In this subsection, we examine an example of direct observation that also illustrates the researcher's role in creating a platform for discussion. Eight years ago, one of the authors posted a video, *Ash Biru u Nagaibakov* [Ash Biru of the Nagaybaks], on their YouTube⁴ channel (Belorussova, 2016). Ash Biru, which means

² Odnoklassniki is a Russian social network owned by VK. <https://ok.ru>

³ Vilna, in fact, a Russian name dating to the Russian Empire was Вильна (Vilna), although Вильнюс (Vilnius) is now used

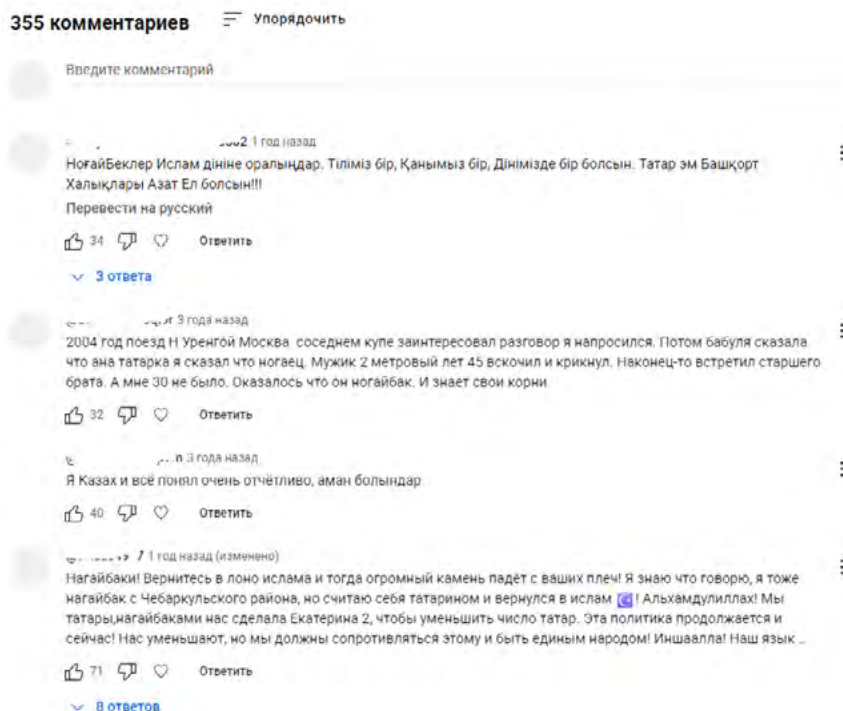
⁴ YouTube™ is a trademark of Google Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries.

“to give soup,” “to give food,” or “to give dinner,” is a memorial rite held in honor of a deceased relative. It involves the ritual slaughter of a cow and a communal meal. As the most esteemed rite among the Nagaybaks, it is typically closed to outsiders, with only relatives of the deceased participating.

The video was also shared on the author’s personal page to make it accessible to a wider audience, regardless of their familiarity with Nagaybak culture. Over the past eight years, it has been viewed 47,000 times on YouTube and 22,000 times on Odnoklassniki. User reactions suggest that it attracted viewers interested in ethnic identity. More than 350 comments were posted, primarily by Tatar users, but also by Kazakh and Nogai viewers. Discussion was less active among Kyrgyz, Bashkir, Turkish, Uzbek, Russian, and Kryashen users. Some Kazakh, Tatar, Kyrgyz, Uzbek, and Turkish commenters wrote in their native languages (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Comments of Users to the Video Ash Biru of the Nagaibaks



Note. Source: Belorussova, 2016.

Discussing Nagaybak rituals often meant sharing personal stories, as many users related their identity to their own ethnic experiences. A large number of comments revealed the user’s nationality, language, or religious affiliation. For example, commenters wrote: “I am Kazakh, I understood their language without translation,” “Kyrgyz people also call it ash,” and “I had never heard of Nogaybaks. I’m a Nogai myself” (Trans. by S. B., K. M., & E. K.).

The religious syncretism in the Ash Biru ritual sparked mixed reactions, with comments such as: “You are Muslims by language, how come you are baptized?” and “Everything is fine, but I don’t understand why there’s an icon” (Trans. by S. B., K. M., & E. K.).

Muslim users took the opportunity to offer guidance to the Nagaybaks on the “true” path of Islam: “Nagaybaks, stop it with Orthodoxy. You are Turks both in customs and way of life”; “Accept Islam ... Don’t confuse yourselves and others ... Don’t you have elders to guide you on the right path?” (Trans. by S. B., K. M., & E. K.).

Some users saw the Ash Biru ritual as blasphemous and a distortion of religion, with comments like: “They are not Muslims and have no right to mention Allah if they are baptized and keep an icon in the house”; “Nonsense! If they pray in Russian, let them do everything in Russian!”; and “Enough. You are Muslims.” The Nagaybaks were called “lost,” “kafirs” (those who do not recognize Allah), and “mankurts” (those deprived of memory), with some comments even threatening retaliation: “Traitors of your ancestors, your future is cursed” (Trans. by S. B., K. M., & E. K.).

The Nagaybaks themselves rarely participated in the discussion but were active observers. Some left supportive comments such as: “Hello Chebarkulans!” or “I am from Kassel, Nagaybak district,” and “We, Nagaybaks of Nagaybak district, also have such traditions” (Trans. by S. B., K. M., & E. K.). A few defended their identity: for example, one user responded to the comment, “It’s a pity, the Nagaybak people have dissolved into the Russian ethnos,” with: “Nobody has dissolved. We live separately. We live in our own way.” In response to the suggestion, “soon they will disappear, dissolve, and become Russians,” a Nagaybak user replied: “We will not disappear anywhere, we take care of our small people, we take care of our customs!” (Belorussova, 2023c; Trans. by S. B., K. M., & E. K.).

In general, Nagaybaks preferred not to actively discuss the video of the rite. Despite high viewing numbers on Odnoklassniki (where the main audience is Nagaybak), the video received fewer than ten comments in six years. However, the comments that were posted reflect how external users view Nagaybak culture. The silence and limited participation from community members also serve as a response, offering insight into contemporary ethnic culture.

Additionally, this example shows the researcher’s indirect influence on attitudes toward the community. While not actively participating in the discussion, the author created a “field” that shaped the discourse around it.

Conducting Surveys

Our research team conducted online questionnaires, including mass surveys across several ethnic groups, e.g., “Korennye Malochislennye Narody i Internet” [Minor Indigenous Peoples and the Internet] and surveys for specific communities, e.g., “Anketa Dlia Besermian” [Questionnaire for Besermians] in 2023. Some focused on specific topics within a community (Belorussova et al., 2020).

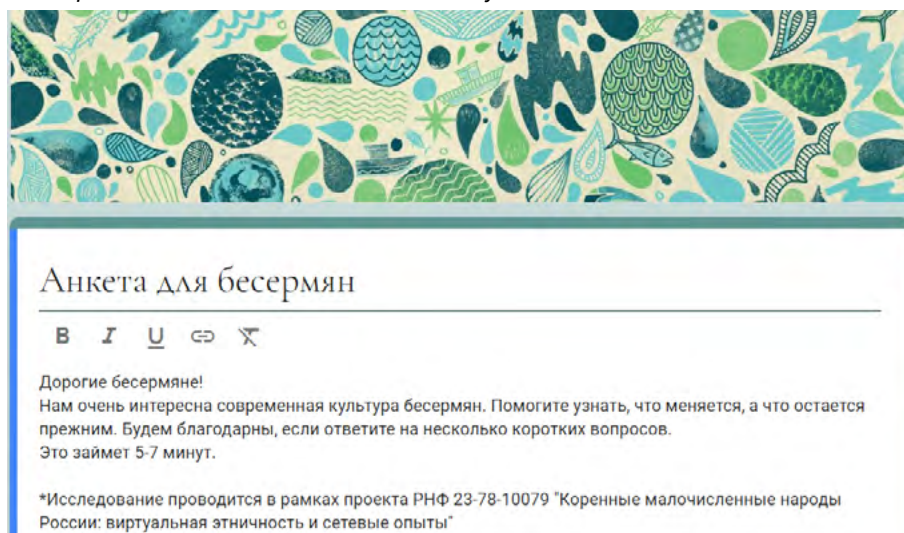
We kept the questions functional, simple, and user-friendly, using both closed questions (with predefined answers) and open questions (for personal responses). At the end, we often asked an open-ended, reflective question, such as, “Do you agree

that today's online activity reflects the real existence of an ethnic group? Why?" to encourage discussion of the Internet's role in ethnic community life.

The number of responses varied from dozens to several hundred, depending on the survey's scope, user interest, and the activity of distributors (Figure 3).

Figure 3

Description of the "Questionnaire for Besermians"



Note. Source: Belorussova, 2023b.

The questionnaire distribution strategy involved several key steps: engaging with moderators of selected online communities, mass mailing to group subscribers, and reaching out to personal acquaintances from the researched ethnic groups. Users were generally interested in the questionnaires, and even with this somewhat closed feedback method, many expressed strong emotions about the process.

Moderators of online communities were among the first to express emotions: most of them published questionnaires and thanked the authors for their labor and attention to their people: "Good afternoon! I published [questionnaire]. Thank you for your interest!" (Trans. by S. B., K. M., & E. K.). Since moderators control the content in their groups, we encountered both acceptance and refusals to publish the survey: "Good afternoon, we do not publish such information. We apologize!" (Trans. by S. B., K. M., & E. K.). Some moderators were creative in sharing the surveys, such as one Seto community post that included a photo of Setos along with the survey invitation.

In addition to moderators, representatives of the surveyed communities also provided feedback. Many were thankful for the surveys: "Hello! I completed the survey. Good luck to you!" and "I want to say THANK YOU for the questionnaire." However, some expressed contrary views: "I don't have time for this [survey]," "Explain in detail why this [survey] is needed and who benefits," and "The word 'minor' in your phrase doesn't add value. Remove it." Others offered suggestions for improving the

questionnaire design: “Good afternoon! For the last question, it would be better to allow multiple answers” (Trans. by S. B., K. M., & E. K.).

Our open-ended questionnaires, which did not contain mandatory questions, allowed us to identify topics of greatest and least interest for ethnic group representatives. The question, “What famous bloggers or representatives of your culture can you name?” was the most challenging for participants from minor Indigenous groups; only 256 out of 325 answered it. Even those who answered had difficulty defining ethnoblogging, as some mentioned activists from the physical rather than the virtual space, or listed TV channels and cultural institutions, which points to the fact that ethnic blogging is still in its early stages of development and not yet familiar to all users.

The question, “Do you use hashtags to represent your ethnic culture? If yes, which ones?” was answered by 300 participants. About 24.5% of respondents from minor Indigenous groups reported using hashtags, while others acknowledged not using them but viewed the idea as a good way to enhance their posts (Belorussova, 2022; Belorussova & Khokholkova, 2023, pp. 173–174). While open questions pose more challenges than closed ones, we strive to maintain a balance between the two in our research.

Quantitative Data Collection

We collected quantitative data from social network groups and used specialized software, including Python code, for analysis and presentation. Google resources (Spreadsheets, Drive, Colaboratory) helped us organize, format, and present data in tabular form. The VK API, in particular API for Python programs, enabled us to access data from VK. The Pandas library provided data structures for manipulating tables, while Pymorphy allowed morphological analysis. Tableau software was used for in-depth data analysis, helping us visually structure the results. Additionally, we displayed analysis results on maps using QGIS 3.28.8.

To date, we have collected and analyzed materials from VK groups of minor Indigenous peoples on the following topics:

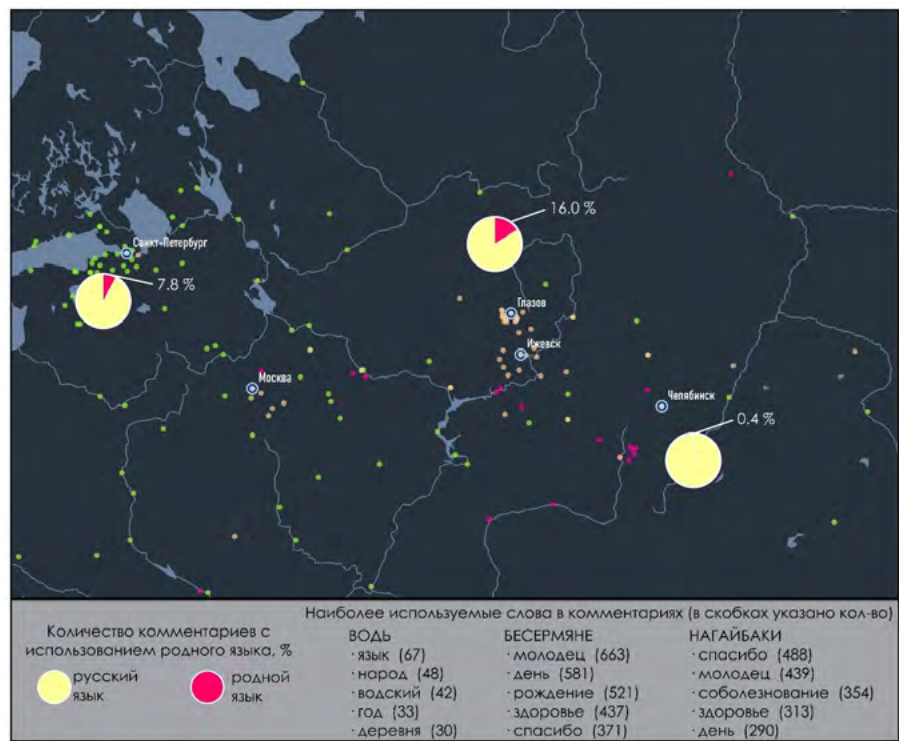
1. General information: dynamics of group creation by year, functionality of groups (active and inactive groups), classification by group organization, classification by internal content.
2. Users: gender and age distribution of subscribers and moderators, number of unique subscribers, geography of subscribers.
3. Language: use of native and non-native language in comments, analyzing frequently used words.

We view quantitative data analysis as promising for the research and plan to expand it by covering more themes, exploring other social networks, and involving additional ethnic groups. Some results are unique in studying the contemporary ethnicity of minor Indigenous peoples and are most effective when combined with qualitative methods.

The following is an analysis of the most frequently used Russian words in comments in the VK groups of Votian, Nagaybaks, and Besermyans. Representatives of Votian groups more often use the words “язык” [iazyk] meaning “language,” “народ” [narod] meaning “people,” “водский” [vodskii] meaning “Votian,” “год” [god]

meaning “year,” “деревня” [derevnia] meaning “village,” “воду” [vod’] meaning “Vod.” In Besermyan groups, “молодец” [molodets] meaning “well done,” “день” [den’] meaning “day,” “рождение” [rozhdenie] meaning “birth,” “здоровье” [zdorov’e] meaning “health,” “спасибо” [spasibo] meaning “thank you,” “поздравлять” [pozdravliat’] meaning “congratulate,” “успех” [uspek] meaning “success,” “счастье” [schast’e] meaning “happiness” are mostly used. In the groups of Nagaybaks, the most common words in the comments are “спасибо” [spasibo] meaning “thank you,” [molodets] meaning “well done,” “соболезнование” [soboleznovanie] meaning “condolence,” “здоровье” [zdorov’e] meaning “health,” “день” [den’] meaning “day,” “память” [pamiat’] meaning “memory,” “небесный” [nebesnyi] meaning “heavenly,” and “Париж” [Parizh] meaning “Paris.” The data suggest that Votians’ comments are primarily focused on ethnic identity. The frequent use of terms like “народ” [narod] meaning “people,” “воду” [vod’] meaning “Vod,” and “водский” [vodskii] meaning “Votian” indicates a sense of distance from the ethnic community, yet also a strong feeling of belonging and concern for its future. The prominence of the word “язык” [iazyk] meaning “language” in the discussions is particularly significant, as preserving the native language is a key issue for many minor Indigenous peoples (Figure 4).

Figure 4
Map of the Most Frequently Used Words Among Nagaybaks, Besermyan, and Votians



Note. Source: developed by A. A. Siuziumov.

In VK groups of Besermyans, the words used have positive connotations: they are written in the context of congratulations, emotional reactions to favorable news, and posts. This generally reflects the positive attitude of the community, which is currently motivated to implement ethnic projects and support the development of its own culture. In Nagaybak groups, the comments also have a positive character; however, the noun “соболезнование” [condolence], which ranks third among the most used, deserves special attention. This noun was used 354 times, and the corresponding verb “соболезновать” [to condole] was used 212 times, making it the most frequently used lexeme among Nagaybaks. This suggests that in the online community of Nagaybaks, reactions to the death of loved ones are accepted and common, unlike in other online communities, where such events typically remain private. This analysis of the words used among minor Indigenous peoples opens new research frontiers that are inaccessible when analyzing purely qualitative data.

Feedback

We conducted a questionnaire survey among representatives of minor Indigenous peoples to gather their feedback on participating in cyberfield research. The results show an overall positive attitude towards the research, including its online format. Specifically, 83.3% of respondents considered the ethnographers’ activities beneficial to their people, while 10.3% did not express a clear opinion, and 6.4% felt it was not useful. When asked about their culture, 93.6% of participants reported feeling a strong sense of belonging to their people. Therefore, it can be concluded that ethnographers, through their work, play a role in fostering ethnic awareness among the community members.

To what extent are representatives of Indigenous peoples oriented towards taking surveys and interviews in online format? To the question “In what form do you prefer to answer questions?” 46.7% said “online only,” 45.6% said “online and in live interaction,” and 6.7% of participants were willing to talk “live.” Thus, today’s Indigenous users generally support digital interaction. However, since the survey was conducted online, it mainly attracted users who are comfortable with digital formats.

In response to the question “Do you have expectations from the survey?” users mostly answered in the affirmative. For some, in particular for the Shapsugs, the topic of receiving benefits, observance of the rights and interests of minor Indigenous peoples, was particularly relevant. According to one of the users, the surveys can contribute to “additional benefits as a minor INDIGENOUS people. Will stop infringing on the interests and rights of the people” (Trans. by S. B., K. M., & E. K.). One respondent expressed hope that academic research would change how the people are perceived in everyday consciousness, with a Chukchi representative wishing that they “stop being joked about” (Trans. by S. B., K. M., & E. K.). The Chukchi respondent likely expressed this desire due to the long-standing stereotypes and misconceptions about their ethnic group, particularly the popular jokes in Russia that portray Chukchis as naive or stupid. Many responses reflected a desire to preserve the language, culture, and the ethnic group itself, with respondents hoping for an overall improvement in the community’s quality of life.

Users value surveys primarily for the potential to preserve their people's memory and increase their recognition among others. One user expressed a desire for their people to "be better known" (Trans. by S. B., K. M., & E. K.), while a Besermyan representative stated that "the survey will help spread knowledge about Besermyan among others" (Trans. by S. B., K. M., & E. K.). Greater recognizability, in turn, supports other goals. According to the Shapsugs, being more recognized means "they will be mentioned more often as a minor Indigenous people of Russia, and over time, it may become easier for the Shapsugs to exercise their rights as such" (Trans. by S. B., K. M., & E. K.). A comment from a Nagaybak representative combined several perspectives:

We hardly expect life to improve, but we do not rule it [the possibility of life turning for the better] out. Yet, the fact that we will not be forgotten, that there will be new publications about us and that they will help us to preserve our identity is the most important thing. (Trans. by S. B., K. M., & E. K.)

For the final question, "What advice would you give to researchers conducting surveys?", there was no consensus among respondents. Users wrote both general wishes of good luck, success, research continuation, and more specific ones: "to learn the language," "to make the questions interesting," "to be more attentive," and "to translate more accurately" (Trans. by S. B., K. M., & E. K.). Some expect support for Indigenous peoples: "to do good", "to do my best for the people", and "not to ignore appeals and requests" (Trans. by S. B., K. M., & E. K.). Many wished researchers to increase communication with representatives of ethnic cultures not only in virtual but also in physical space. A Khanty user recommended "to communicate closer with the people themselves, and not to take information from the Internet"; a Shapsug suggested "to get acquainted with our people in person"; a Besermyan respondent advised "not to conduct surveys, but scientific research and expeditions!" (Trans. by S. B., K. M., & E. K.). Thus, direct communication with scholars in real-world conditions proves to be significant for representatives of the Indigenous people.

Reflections on Digital Fieldwork: Principles and Pitfalls

In light of the above, we believe that three key principles should be observed in the preparation of interviews and the design of surveys and questionnaires.

Openness. We believe in allowing users the freedom to respond without pressure. For example, we consider it unacceptable to make all questions in a questionnaire mandatory. We also value refusals, discussions, and criticism, including of our work, as they are crucial to the research process. Any response, whether positive, negative, or neutral, along with any reaction, such as joy, interest, or annoyance, is seen as a valuable part of the ongoing discourse and dialogue with users.

Functionality. When designing a questionnaire or preparing for an interview, we aim to craft questions that maximize results with minimal resources. Each question should allow for a broad and meaningful response from the interviewee. We focus on clarity to avoid ambiguity and ensure precise wording.

Compactness. Both the question and the survey should be meaningful, concise, and to the point. Large amounts of data, excessive text, multiple questions, and “questions within a question” can diminish user interest. Even a highly authoritative researcher cannot achieve the desired results without maintaining brevity in online surveys.

Online research offers clear advantages, such as wide accessibility and the ability to conduct studies from anywhere—whether at work or home—allowing for 24/7 immersion. However, this method also has its drawbacks.

First, experience shows that virtual research is often incomplete without real exposure to the ethnographic environment. For instance, some groups, like the Tubalars, may avoid openly expressing themselves online for various reasons. The Tubalars primarily communicate through closed WhatsApp⁵ groups, a fact discovered only through personal contact within their communities. This example shows that physical research can reveal contexts and nuances of virtuality that may not be visible in open online spaces.

Second, the vast amount of data provided by virtuality can be overwhelming and difficult to organize. We agree with Gabriele de Seta’s view that an ethnographer acts as a director, shaping the narrative that best reflects the research (de Seta, 2020). For example, in analyzing the video *Ash Biru u Nagaybakov* [Ash Biru of the Nagaybaks], we selected a few comments to highlight the discussion between users and the participation of Nagaybaks themselves, while excluding over 350 other comments due to the article’s thematic constraints.

Third, the collection of material, especially quantitative data, captures a moment in time. Once a dataset is established, it can quickly become outdated or “historical” as it reflects a phenomenon evolving within a specific time frame. The rapid evolution of the Internet—marked by the constant appearance of new users, platforms, trends, and modes of communication—further underscores this issue. Additionally, the development of virtual communities is influenced by external factors, including politics, social relations, and technological and economic changes, all of which shape the online environment.

Conclusion

Today’s virtual environment offers a broad range of research opportunities, including the application of both qualitative and quantitative methods, conducting surveys, and compiling databases. Network analysis streamlines work, saving effort, time, and financial resources. According to the questionnaires, nearly half of the representatives of minor Indigenous peoples prefer the online format, even without the addition of in-person interaction. Paradoxically, however, one of the main wishes expressed for online research was the inclusion of “live” contact, such as trips, expeditions, and personal interactions. Thus, despite the growing use of cybermedia in ethnographic research, respondents still advocate for studying their culture in person rather than virtually. This sentiment is echoed by scholars as well: observing only the virtual environment makes it difficult to grasp a people’s contemporary cultural values, distinctive features,

⁵ WhatsApp is a trademark of WhatsApp Inc., registered in the US and other countries.

and nuances. In recent years, studying virtuality has highlighted the significance of real-world interaction. It becomes clear that the “digital” and “physical” fields are increasingly intertwined, and their combination enables a more comprehensive ethnographic approach, rich in specifics, details, and context.

References

- Abidin, C., & de Seta, G. (2020). Private messages from the field: Confessions on digital ethnography and its discomforts. *Journal of Digital Social Research*, 2(1), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.33621/jdsr.v2i1.35>
- Androutsopoulos, J. (2008). Potentials and limitations of discourse-centred online ethnography. *Language@Internet*, 5, Article 9.
- Baym, N. K. (2009). What constitutes quality in qualitative internet research. In A. N. Markham & N. K. Baym (Eds.), *Internet inquiry: Conversations about method* (pp. 173–189). SAGE. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483329086.n16>
- Belorussova, S. (2016, March 27). *Ash biru u nagaibakov* [Ash Biru of the Nagaybaks] [Video]. Youtube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q5lYmhALzs8>
- Belorussova, S. Yu. (2018, March 26). *Dorogie moi nagaibaki! Obrashchaius' s pros'boi. V Sankt-Peterburge ia poznakomilas' s pravnuchkoi Ivana Georgievicha Isaeva—kazaka, generala, voennogo gubernatora Vil'niusa* [My dear Nagaibaks! I am writing to you with a request. In St. Petersburg I met the great-granddaughter of Ivan Georgievich Isaev, a Cossack, general, military governor of Vilnius] [Images attached]. Odnoklassniki. <https://ok.ru/profile/120638682250/statuses/68012065726602>
- Belorussova, S. Yu. (2021). Kiberetnografiia: Metodologii i tekhnologii [Cyberethnography: Methodology and technology]. *Etnografia*, 3, 123–145. [https://doi.org/10.31250/2618-8600-2021-3\(13\)-123-145](https://doi.org/10.31250/2618-8600-2021-3(13)-123-145)
- Belorussova, S. Yu. (2022). Korennye malochislennye narody Rossii: Virtual'naia etnichnost' i setevye opyty [Indigenous small-numbered peoples of Russia: Virtual ethnicity and network experiences]. *Etnografia*, 4, 84–111. [https://doi.org/10.31250/2618-8600-2022-4\(18\)-84-111](https://doi.org/10.31250/2618-8600-2022-4(18)-84-111)
- Belorussova, S. Yu. (2023a). Ischezaiut li nagaibaki? [Are Nagaibaks disappearing?]. *Etnografia*, 1, 203–224. [https://doi.org/10.31250/2618-8600-2023-1\(19\)-203-224](https://doi.org/10.31250/2618-8600-2023-1(19)-203-224)
- Belorussova, S. Yu. (2023b, December 20). *Dorogie besermiane! Seichas ia provozhu issledovanie deiatel'nosti besermian v sotsial'nykh setiakh. Otvet'te, pozhaluista, na korotkie voprosy ankety. Eto pomozhet* [Dear Besermians! Now I am conducting a study of Besermyan activity in social networks. Please answer the short questions of the questionnaire. This will help]. [Image attached]. VK. https://vk.com/wall3992144_3779
- Belorussova, S. Yu. (2023c, January 12). *Na proshloi nedele prishli rezul'taty perepisi 2020 g. po natsional'nomu sostavu naseleniia Rossii. Po korennym malochislennym narodam vrode vse neplokho—chislennost'* [Last week, the results of the 2020 census on the national composition of Russia's population came in.

The number of minor Indigenous peoples seems to be good—the number] [Image attached]. VK. https://vk.com/wall3992144_3719

Belorussova, S. Yu., Danilova, E. N., & Sysoeva., M. E. (2020). Kheshtegi i etnichnost' [Hashtags and ethnicity]. *Etnografia*, 3, 33–61. [https://doi.org/10.31250/2618-8600-2020-3\(9\)-33-61](https://doi.org/10.31250/2618-8600-2020-3(9)-33-61)

Belorussova, S. Yu., & Khokhlova, N. E. (2023). Virtual'nost' i global'nost' (na primere korennykh narodov Rossii i Afriki) [The virtual and the global: Indigenous peoples of Russia and Africa in digital environment]. *Etnografia*, 4, 160–180. [https://doi.org/10.31250/2618-8600-2023-4\(22\)-160-180](https://doi.org/10.31250/2618-8600-2023-4(22)-160-180)

Boellstorff, T. (2015). *Coming of age in Second Life: An anthropologist explores the virtually human*. Princeton University Press.

de Seta, G. (2020). Three lies of digital ethnography. *Journal of Digital Social Research*, 2(1), 77–97. <https://doi.org/10.33621/jdsr.v2i1.24>

Fine, G. A. (1993). Ten lies of ethnography: Moral dilemmas of field research. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 22(3), 267–294. <https://doi.org/10.1177/089124193022003001>

Gatson, S. N. (2012). The methods, politics, and ethics of representation in online ethnography. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials* (4th ed., pp. 245–275). SAGE.

Golovnev, A. V. (2020). Kiberskorost' [Cyberspeed]. *Etnografia*, 3, 6–32. [https://doi.org/10.31250/2618-8600-2020-3\(9\)-6-32](https://doi.org/10.31250/2618-8600-2020-3(9)-6-32)

Golovnev, A. V., Belorussova, S. Yu., & Kisser, T. S. (2021). *Virtual'naia etnichnost' i kiberetnografiia* [Virtual ethnicity and cyberethnography]. MAE RAS.

Hine, C. (2000). *Virtual ethnography*. SAGE. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9780857020277>

Markham, A. (2012). Fabrication as ethical practice: Qualitative inquiry in ambiguous Internet contexts. *Information, Communication & Society*, 15(3), 334–353. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118x.2011.641993>

Miller, D., Costa, E., Haynes, N., McDonald, T., Nicolescu, R., Sinanan, J., Spyer, J., Venkatraman, S., & Wang, X. (2016). *How the world changed social media*. UCL Press. <https://doi.org/10.14324/111.9781910634493>

Miller, D., & Slater, D. (2020). *The Internet: An ethnographic approach*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003087007>

Poster, M. (1998). Virtual ethnicity: Tribal identity in an age of global communications. In S. G. Jones (Ed.), *Cybersociety 2.0: Revisiting computer-mediated communication and community* (pp. 184–211). SAGE. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452243689.n7>

Snodgrass, J. G. (2014). Ethnography of online cultures. In H. R. Bernard & C. C. Gravlee (Eds.), *Handbook of methods in cultural anthropology* (2nd ed., pp. 465–495). Rowman & Littlefield.



ARTICLE IN THE SPECIAL SECTION

Social Media, Cultural Values, and Digital Citizenship: A Study of Iranian Digital Natives

Sara Tabatabaei

Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University), Moscow, Russia

Bella A. Bulgarova

Alnoor University, Mosul, Iraq; Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University), Moscow, Russia

Galina N. Trofimova

Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University), Moscow, Russia

Victor V. Barabash

Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University), Moscow, Russia

ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of social media engagement on cultural values among Iranian digital natives. A quantitative survey was conducted with 384 participants using a random online sampling method. The theoretical framework is based on Goffman's dramaturgical model theory and Rogers' diffusion theory. The findings reveal a significant negative correlation between the frequency of social media usage and adherence to cultural values, indicating that excessive use of social media may erode national cultural values and promote individualistic tendencies. Conversely, engagement with content that aligns with Iranian cultural values positively correlates with adherence to these values, underscoring the potential for social media to strengthen cultural values and preserve cultural heritage. This study highlights that social media engagement can have both positive and negative effects on cultural values, depending on the nature of the engagement. When used thoughtfully, social media can aid in the preservation and dissemination of cultural values. However, it also poses risks, including cyber vandalism and the degradation of

cultural values. In conclusion, fostering media literacy for responsible digital citizenship is crucial for leveraging social media's potential to preserve and promote cultural values. This approach can help create a healthier, culturally aware digital environment that protects cultural heritage.

KEYWORDS

social media, cultural values, digital natives, Iranian culture, Generation Z, digital citizenship, digital culture, media literacy, social media engagement

Introduction

Cultural values constitute a paramount feature of societies; and as social phenomena, they assume a pivotal function in shaping, regulating, forecasting, and predisposing human behavior, thus representing a fundamental constituent of the cultural fabric of societies. The internalization of societal values at a particular juncture engenders the process and modality of individuals' actions (Ali Akbari & Saborikhosroshahi, 2018). The significance of values as the conduit between the culture of a nation and its posterity cannot be overstated, and disregarding this crucial connection may precipitate an existential crisis for societies. In fact, Inglehart posits that values are so fundamental to this relationship that effecting a "silent revolution" in a country necessitates a transformation of its public values, given that values constitute the fundamental determinant of stability or cultural upheaval (Inglehart, 2015).

Cultural values are propagated, transformed, and sustained through the influence of both formal and informal media, with a particular emphasis on social media platforms (Seraj, 2012). According to Sumskeya (2023), the Internet has evolved into a cultural instrument that facilitates the creation of new cultural practices, trends, and interpretations. As a means of communication, social media consciously or unconsciously conveys certain aspects of the culture and values of its users. Conversely, the activities of social media users generate a form of culture that is shaped by their contributions; these users can be considered as both participants and creators within this domain, disseminating modified and virtual culture, ideals, and values (Vodanovich et al., 2017).

Although digital technology has the potential to facilitate cross-cultural dialogue and communication, it does not guarantee equal representation of all values and cultures in the public domain. This disparity can lead to limitations in cultural awareness and cultural criticism (Khezri et al., 2022). Furthermore, Iorga et al. (2020) argue that while cyberspace can promote the ideals of dominant cultures, it can also discourage individuals from engaging with their native cultures and effectuate a transformation of their cultural identity. Indeed, social media serves as a pertinent platform for the exchange and interaction of cultural and societal values, contributing to the metamorphosis of these values and behaviors.

Through the provision of cognitive resources, social media nurtures the emergence of new sociocultural paradigms that diverge significantly from the established norms of different societies, including Iran. In this context, certain behaviors are perceived as undesirable and contrary to the prevailing values that are venerated within the social media environment. The ramifications of uncritical emulation and unguided engagement, particularly prevalent among adolescents and young users, can be deleterious not only to their well-being (Sumskaya, 2023), but also to their cultural mores and sense of self (Abramova et al., 2022).

The imperative of scrutinizing this phenomenon is accentuated by the substantial amount of leisure time that digital natives and their families dedicate to this platform. This issue is compounded by the scarcity of culturally relevant cognitive resources and the limited generation of indigenous content within this sphere. As a result, the media in question propagates a homogenized model, the uncritical adoption of which may engender pernicious and enduring consequences.

Therefore, this study endeavors to explore the impact of social media consumption patterns on adherence to cultural values among Iranians aged 15 to 25, commonly referred to as digital natives (Ahn & Jung, 2016), or “digital media generations” (Sumskaya, 2023). This demographic group is significantly influenced—both positively and negatively—by the cultural and value content generated by social media platforms. The research employs survey methodologies to gather data and insights into these dynamics.

Literature Review

Numerous studies have examined values and adherence to values in Iran (e.g., Ashayeri et al., 2024); however, there has been a lack of focus on cultural values. These studies have primarily concentrated on religious and social values when defining and indexing them, or they have considered individual characteristics as cultural values (e.g., Razazi et al., 2024). Nevertheless, the present research adopts a cultural perspective on values, scrutinizing the behaviors that exemplify the Iranian culture of altruism, cooperation, and solidarity.

In Iranian culture, there is a distinct emphasis on rituals, traditions, synchronicity, companionship, and empathy within the family structure (Bar, 2004; Razazi et al., 2024). Additionally, the interactions that shape family relationships, along with virtues such as honesty, integrity, responsibility, and selflessness, play a vital role in Iranian society, which is inherently oriented towards familial bonds and cooperative endeavors (Ashayeri et al., 2024). While these cultural values are integral to Iranian identity, it is crucial to recognize that similar values can manifest in different ways across various cultures, shaped by unique geographical, linguistic, and historical contexts.

To further illustrate this distinction, we consider the concepts of “Taarof,” which is a complex system of politeness and social interaction that reflects Iran’s cultural emphasis on hospitality and respect. It often involves a kind of verbal dance where offers and refusals are exchanged through layers of politeness, demonstrating the value placed on generosity and social harmony. This concept extends to the treatment

of guests, who are accorded the utmost respect and care. Moreover, we consider the concept of “ایثار” [isar] meaning “selflessness” in Iranian culture, which reflects a historical perspective that champions sacrifice for the family and community. This notion is deeply rooted in Iran’s historical experiences, particularly during the Iran–Iraq War, when individuals displayed profound acts of selflessness in service to their nation. This cultural value resonates with contemporary examples of altruism seen during community crises, showcasing how historical memory shapes the Iranian understanding of selflessness today. However, certain traditional values have waned in significance among the younger generation, a trend attributed to the influence of global culture and modern platforms, such as social media.

Rezaei Kamal Abad (2023) conducted a survey of 371 Iranian social media users, revealing that social media presents a complex environment for the adoption and rejection of societal cultural values. The assimilation or rejection of media cultural values is contingent upon the individual’s level of cultural affinity and awareness. When individuals are closely aligned with their cultural values, their social media engagements tend to mirror the patterns and values of their society, thereby reinforcing cultural norms. Conversely, those less connected to their society’s values and more inclined toward the values of another culture are predisposed to easily embrace them. Evidently, the acceptance of values is influenced by users’ attitudes toward both their own cultural values and those of the host culture. Moreover, the extent of user activity and the alignment of social media content with user preferences can contribute to the diminishing significance of traditional values (Rezaei Kamal Abad, 2023). According to Abbasi’s (2021) survey of 364 Tehran residents over the age of 18 who are heavy users of social media, those highly interested in this domain tend to display reduced interest in traditional familial and societal ties as well as traditional clothing. Additionally, such individuals exhibit a heightened propensity toward materialism, avoidance of responsibility, and emotional detachment. They tend to prioritize personal freedom over adherence to social norms and laws, and modern media has further diminished the significance of shared social values in the context of selecting a partner and perpetuating social biases (Abbasi, 2020). These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the impact of social media engagement among digital natives on social values and relationships within the specific cultural context of Tehran.

Mele et al. (2021) conducted a thorough examination of the behavior of social media activists, and their findings revealed that the content produced and published within the social media space reflects diverse cultural and social values. The study emphasized that social media posts often prioritize self-centered perspectives and individualistic values, which are transmitted through the content. These individual values of the users play a significant role in shaping the values and attitudes of others, and the more popular and influential a user is, the more likely their values are to influence others and attract people to their culture and values (Mele et al., 2021).

The use of social media has significantly affected cultural values among young people, particularly digital natives, in various ways. Rezapour (2020) conducted a survey of 384 Iranian students and discovered that the adoption of social media values without knowledge has led to the erosion of family and traditional values among

users. The study found that the self-centered and individualistic values of social media, which prioritize individual interests over collective well-being, have become dominant. Furthermore, the attractiveness and trust-building aspects of new media content play a crucial role in the acceptance of propagandistic values. As digital life and automation become more prevalent, values such as love, altruism, self-sacrifice, and sympathy have weakened. Rezapour (2020) compares social media communication to fire, emphasizing that its effects and benefits depend on the purpose and function of use. While efficient use can be a valuable tool, misuse can lead to the destruction of values. Furthermore, according to Jahromi and Taghiabadi's (2019) investigation into the portrayal of celebrity lifestyles on social media, the platform's emphasis on self-promotion and self-expression, as well as the allure of fame, engenders a proclivity among users to embrace individualistic values and propaganda. The ostentatious nature of social media, coupled with its growing ubiquity and users' reliance on it, is posited to contribute to the erosion of moral and cultural values. Beyranvandzadeh et al. (2019) conducted a study involving 54 experts from an Iranian Advertising Organization, revealing a significant association between the development of culturally and religiously oriented content and social media cultural activities and the preservation of cultural values. The study suggests that purposeful engagement and content creation with a cultural focus in virtual spaces contribute to the reinforcement of cultural values, while inefficient and unfocused utilization may lead to the propagation of non-cultural values and the erosion of cultural integrity.

Jamwal (2015) conducted a comprehensive review of scholarly literature, revealing that the forces of globalization and the proliferation of new media have precipitated pervasive transformations across various domains of human existence. Notably, this has engendered a diminishment of cultural values and a fracturing of moral precepts. Consequently, contemporary society is confronted with an unparalleled cultural exodus. The ubiquity of virtual networks has facilitated children's unfettered exposure to a panoply of deleterious content, including violence, sexual content, larceny, and antisocial conduct. Moreover, the social media sphere serves as a conduit for the propagation of distinct values through mediums such as advertising, music, and cinema, which may engender discord with the prevailing cultural and social mores. Individuals are compelled to either affirm or repudiate their value systems in response to the moral didactics promulgated by the media. Furthermore, social media can serve as a catalyst for the dissemination of ethical paradigms such as altruism or, conversely, the propagation of iniquitous principles, including deceit, duplicity, and larceny. The author posits that the exhibition of positive conduct within the social media realm may engender a disregard for media-driven antisocial comportment, thereby potentially exerting a salutary influence on the psyche of its consumers (Jamwal, 2015).

Social media has emerged as a powerful tool for preserving and promoting cultural heritage in the digital age. It offers platforms for participatory culture, allowing communities to collectively curate and share their heritage (Pitsillides et al., 2012). Social media facilitates broader public engagement in cultural heritage management, enabling diverse stakeholders to contribute to decision-making processes (Ng et al., 2024). For diaspora communities, social media serves as a vital means of maintaining

cultural identities and practices across geographical boundaries (Panchal & Mago, 2024). Additionally, social media data can be extracted and archived to support the preservation of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage, as demonstrated in the case of Nineveh (Rashid & Qasha, 2022). While social media presents challenges to traditional heritage preservation, it also offers unprecedented opportunities for community involvement, cross-cultural communication, and the sustainability of cultural practices in an increasingly digital world.

This literature review underscores the significance of comprehending the impact of social media on cultural values, specifically among digital natives, and provides insights into the intricate relationship between social media engagement style and the preservation of traditional values, particularly in the Iranian milieu, where traditional values are deeply entrenched (Tabatabaei, 2020). Consequently, the present study endeavors to scrutinize the influence of social media consumption patterns on adherence to cultural values, specifically concerning purposeful presence and activity, and the acceptance of global and social media culture, while disregarding the religious dimension. By examining the social media engagement style and adherence to cultural values, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of social media in shaping cultural values and attitudes in the specific context of Iranian society.

Theoretical Approach

The cultural structure of a society is shaped by its cultural values, which determine the direction of feelings and behaviors in social life (Ashayeri et al., 2024). The values that a society considers necessary, respectable, sacred, and desirable are among its core values (Pourkiani, 2016, pp. 77–79). The theoretical framework of this research is based on Goffman's dramaturgical model theory and Rogers' diffusion theory. Goffman's theory emphasizes the importance of impression management as a positive social value, which individuals hold for themselves and expect others to recognize in social interactions (Hosseini, 2021, p. 155). The role that a person performs in front of an audience expresses the accepted and official values of society and represents the accepted social and cultural values (Goffman, 1956/2013, pp. 53–54). On social media pages, people expose themselves by posting and showcasing aspects of their personality that they want to be made public. By placing their desired images and texts on their social media pages as a personal medium, they try to communicate and present themselves to their followers. When one appears in front of others, one usually combines one's activities with signs to dramatically highlight and confirm affirmative facts that might otherwise remain invisible or obscure (Mohamadi et al., 2020). In the context of social media platforms, individuals have the opportunity to effectively present their perspectives and demonstrate their ethical, ideological, and global cognitive attractiveness through the deliberate modification and innovation of their modes of communication.

Erving Goffman posits that individuals seek solace in communal environments to cultivate a desired persona, elude the constraints of reality, and evade the

apprehension of social stigmatization. This inclination is exacerbated by extensive engagement with diverse forms of media, wherein individuals strive for validation and financial gain by conforming to sanctioned norms and values through self-presentation (Goffman, 1956/2013, pp. 68–69).

The ubiquity of smartphones, characterized by their constant presence and connectivity, has integrated them into the fabric of our daily routines and ordinary moments of life. This has led to the development of new habits and practices, such as taking photos, updating statuses, leaving comments, or sharing photos on social media platforms. The social media sphere has significantly impacted our daily routines, particularly among digital natives, introducing novel patterns and norms (Ahn & Jung, 2016). As a result, we have experienced a transformation in our media identity and personalization (Mahdizadeh, 2017, pp. 42–43).

Consequently, drawing from Goffman's theory, one can assert that the pursuit of self-expression on social media is closely linked to adherence to social values, and the influence of users' presence and activity on those values is also a significant factor. Additionally, Rogers posits that the media occasionally intervenes in safeguarding other cultures and exploits their thematic and content capabilities, mirrors media products originating from other societies, or conforms to the course of cultural diffusion, thereby acquainting the audience with unfamiliar value systems and enabling cultural-value juxtapositions (Rogers, 2006). Hence, the media serves as a conduit for the individual and communal values of a given society (Windhal et al., 1992, p. 76). The media's content serves as a conduit for a diverse array of ideas, attitudes, and innovations disseminated within societies, potentially posing challenges to and undermining national cultures. For instance, social media, through its portrayal of events, construction of pseudo-realities, establishment of a virtual realm, selective shaping of perceptions, manipulation of temporal and spatial dimensions, artistic allure, diverse program formats, uniformity and persistence of content, as well as curation and treatment of popular topics in accordance with audience preferences, plays a role in the cultivation and dissemination of cultural elements and desired cultural values (Mahdizadeh, 2017). In this manner, social media contributes to the modulation of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral domains by disseminating and advocating for diverse societal values, as well as fostering global perspectives. This influence can result in the intentional or unintentional alteration or fortification of individual values. As Rogers' theory places emphasis on the content and structure of messages on social media and their relationship to values, it can be concluded that there is a correlation between the content of social media and adherence to values.

According to Rogers, the media serve as conduits or catalysts for novel ideas, thoughts, and societal values, thereby challenging conventional norms (Zhang et al., 2020). In essence, the media foster innovation across various domains, such as social, political, cultural, and economic, playing a pivotal role in the establishment and evolution of new values and innovations while concurrently eschewing traditional values (Abbasi, 2020). The utilization of social media engenders the cultivation of fresh perspectives within the audience's psyche, elevating their aspirations and engendering a desire to supplant their current circumstances with the idealized conditions prevalent

in the virtual realm of social media (Beheshti et al., 2020). Social media facilitates the audience in embracing innovation and delineates the means to attain it, engendering trust and aiding in the identification of values that align with their individual and social mores, which are synonymous with traditional values, thereby effecting change and anchoring them with new global values (Ashayeri et al., 2024). Furthermore, Rogers underscores the significance of individuals' affirmative disposition towards the virtual sphere and technology in shaping social values, alluding to trust. Consequently, it can be posited that a correlation exists between attitudes towards social media content and adherence to cultural values.

In conclusion, this theoretical framework draws from Goffman's dramaturgical model and Rogers' diffusion theory to explore the relationship between social media engagement styles and adherence to cultural values. Goffman's theory emphasizes the importance of impression as a positive social value, while Rogers posits that the media serve as conduits for the individual and communal values of a given society. Based on the literature review and theoretical approach provided in this research, the concepts under investigation are defined and measured.

Digital Citizenship

Digital citizenship encompasses the ability to engage in online society, emphasizing participation, equality, and responsible behavior in digital spaces (Heath, 2020; Sadiku et al., 2018). It extends traditional notions of citizenship into cyberspace, requiring specific skills such as media literacy and digital ethics, as well as access to technology (Heath, 2020). The concept also addresses moral education in the context of digital interactions, highlighting issues such as cyberbullying and privacy violations (Balinska-Ourdeva, 2015). Furthermore, digital citizenship promotes social inclusion and economic opportunity, with evidence suggesting that regular Internet use correlates with higher wages and increased civic engagement (Mossberger et al., 2007). However, significant disparities in access and skills persist, particularly among marginalized groups, necessitating public policy interventions to foster equitable participation in the digital age (Mossberger et al., 2007).

The Proper Use of Social Media

The proper use of social media requires adherence to ethical guidelines and responsible engagement. A systematic analysis of social media cases led to the development of fifteen ethical guidelines for digital engagement. Normative moral theory is presented as a way to initiate a discussion that fosters a deeper understanding of ethics in the burgeoning realm of digital engagement (Bowen, 2013). This study emphasizes the importance of moral principles in social media use, highlighting integrity, transparency, and respect in digital communication.

The first guideline advocates for fairness and justice, underscoring the importance of considering the audiences right to access information. It is strongly advised to avoid any form of deception, as even ambiguous representations can

undermine credibility. Maintaining the dignity and respect of all individuals involved is essential for fostering positive interactions. Additionally, unless confidentiality pertains to legitimate trade secrets, any initiative that requires secrecy should prompt ethical scrutiny.

The guidelines also encourage users to contemplate the reversibility of their messages, urging them to evaluate how they might feel if the message were directed at them. Transparency is critical, particularly regarding paid content, which should be clearly labeled to avoid confusion. Distinctions between personal opinions and official communications must be made for clarity. A rational analysis of messages is advised to foresee potential misinterpretations across diverse audiences, and efforts should be made to enhance the clarity of all communications. Transparency concerning the creation of messages and the factual information they contain is vital for informed decision-making.

Furthermore, maintaining credibility depends on verifying all sources and data rather than relying on speculation. Each message should reflect a commitment to ethical responsibility and good intentions, promoting connections and community engagement among audiences. Finally, consistency in messaging builds trust, allowing audiences to understand and have confidence in the communicator's intentions.

Collectively, these guidelines are intended to foster ethical engagement and principled practices in the realm of social media (Bowen, 2013). Therefore, "proper use of social media" can be articulated as responsible and ethical engagement with social media platforms, aimed at fostering constructive interactions, respect for diversity, and the positive sharing of content while adhering to community standards and guidelines.

Cultural Value

Cultural value refers to the significance or worth assigned to specific beliefs, practices, artifacts, and behaviors within a particular culture or society. It encompasses the ideas, norms, and symbols that shape a community's identity, social structure, and interactions. According to Schwartz (1992), cultural values act as guiding principles that influence individual goals and behaviors. These values can be categorized into universal principles that manifest differently across cultures, reflecting the unique priorities of each society.

Additionally, Geertz (1973) underscores that cultural values must be understood within their socio-historical contexts, highlighting the variability in what is regarded as valuable or meaningful across diverse cultures. Hofstede (1980) further identifies how differences in cultural values impact communication styles, organizational behavior, and social interactions. The researcher posits that understanding cultural values is crucial for fostering effective cross-cultural relationships in our increasingly globalized world (Hofstede, 1980).

Thus, cultural values are fundamental to comprehending human behavior within societies, influencing individual decision-making and broader social dynamics. They are shaped by a complex interplay of historical, social, and environmental factors, and they represent a vital area of study within the social sciences.

Iranian Cultural Values

Cultural values not only form the basis for our moral judgments regarding human actions but also embody the essence of a society's culture (Ashayeri et al., 2024). These values serve as both goal-setting determinants and guides for the behavior of community members. In this survey, we aim to assess the following four key dimensions of cultural values as they relate to behaviors and beliefs within Iranian society:

1. *Social Commitment and Sense of Responsibility.* This dimension emphasizes voluntary adherence to societal norms, a strong sense of loyalty to the community, and a sensitive awareness of responsibilities towards the environment and others. For instance, in many Iranian cities, there are Basij groups, which are volunteer organizations initially founded during the Iran–Iraq War. These groups organize various community support initiatives, ranging from disaster relief efforts to educational projects for underprivileged areas. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, many Basij volunteers distributed masks and food packages to those in need, demonstrating communal solidarity and a strong sense of responsibility towards fellow citizens.

2. *Honesty and Integrity.* In this aspect, honesty in both speech and actions, along with trustworthiness, plays a critical role. A common practice is to maintain transparency in negotiations, as seen in traditional bazaars where merchants are expected to be forthright about pricing and product quality. This builds trust and long-lasting relationships within the Iranian community.

3. *Adherence to Family Values.* This dimension highlights the significance of communication, relationships, synchronicity, and empathy within the family unit. In Iranian culture, family gatherings hold immense significance, particularly during pivotal events such as Nowruz, the Persian New Year, and the Yalda Night (Shab-e Yalda) celebration. During Yalda Night, which occurs on the longest night of the year, families unite to share fruits, nuts, and specially prepared meals. The evening is often enriched by the recitation of poetry, particularly the works of Hafez, along with the sharing of stories from family history. Such traditions not only foster deep connections among family members but also emphasize the critical importance of familial ties and cultural heritage. Through these gatherings, families reinforce their bonds and promote open communication, support, and empathy, illustrating the fundamental role of family in Iranian society.

4. *Traditional–Historical Value.* This dimension encompasses altruism, a preference for fellow countrymen, affiliation with local culture and rituals, and participation in festivals. A prime example of this is the annual celebration of Nowruz, the Persian New Year, which is deeply imbued with historical significance and traditional values. One notable practice during Nowruz is the arrangement of the Haft-Seen table, which features seven items that begin with the Persian letter S. Each item symbolizes distinct hopes for the new year, including health, wealth, and rebirth. Families devote considerable effort to preparing this table, thereby reflecting their

connection to cultural heritage and embodying the values of renewal and prosperity that are central to Iranian identity. All these values have been assessed to provide a comprehensive understanding of their impact on individuals and society as a whole.

The present study also examines social media engagement styles, which refer to the patterns of engagement and social media consumption behavior. Specifically, the engagement style is operationalized in terms of four dimensions: (a) the duration of social media usage and the level of presence on the platform; (b) the purpose of activity on social media, including sharing or producing content related to Iranian values, rituals and ceremonies, social issues, altruism, and respect; (c) the degree of self-expression on social media, encompassing the inclination to display personal life, employ various tactics to gain user approval and views, constantly follow the lives of influencers, and derive satisfaction from receiving likes; and (d) social snacking, which refers to using social media as a means to graze on content that is appealing and entertaining. These four dimensions have been assessed in the current investigation.

Methodology

The research conducted in this study is both applied in purpose and descriptive and correlational in nature, utilizing a survey-based quantitative research method. The statistical population of the study consists of Iranian social media users aged between 15 and 25. The sample size was estimated to be 384 individuals based on Cochran's formula.

A random sampling method was employed, and the research instrument used was a questionnaire developed by the researchers. Its validity was assessed through face validity, while its reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha. Data collection was conducted online. Furthermore, the internal reliability of the research variables was examined using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which exceeded 70%, indicating acceptable reliability.

Results

Based on the outcomes of the survey conducted in this study, it was observed that among 384 participants, the mean duration of social media usage is 5.32 hours per day, with the minimum and maximum durations being one and 10 hours, respectively. Furthermore, a majority of the respondents (51.6%) indicated an average daily usage of social media.

Table 1 presents findings indicating that the majority of respondents (53.4%) exhibit a low level of engagement with social media content that aligns with Iranian cultural values. Additionally, 46.9% of respondents express a strong desire for self-expression on social media. However, the majority of respondents (51.3%) demonstrate a low level of social snacking in their social media consumption style.

Furthermore, our analysis reveals that the majority of respondents (53.9%) exhibit a moderate level of adherence to cultural values. Breaking down this response further, it is noteworthy that a significant majority (57.8%) of participants demonstrate

a moderate level of commitment to honesty and integrity, while a substantial proportion (51.9%) adhere to traditional-historical values at a high level. In contrast, the level of social commitment and sense of responsibility is reported to be relatively low among 50.8% of respondents, as is the case for adherence to family values and relationships, which is also reported to be low among 58.6% of our sample size.

Table 1
Percentage Distribution of Social Media Engagement Style and Adherence to Cultural Values

Variable		Mean	Median	Mod	SD	Low	Moderate	High
Social media engagement style	Engagement in content aligned with Iranian cultural values	18.13	18	16	4.73	53.4	31.8	14.8
	Self-expression on social media	25.71	29	34	10.19	34.6	18.5	46.9
	Social snacking	20.70	20	19	4.61	51.3	44.5	4.2
Adherence to cultural values	Social commitment and sense of responsibility	18.62	18	16	3.59	50.8	48.4	0.8
	Honesty and integrity	16.95	17	17	5.39	25.3	57.8	16.9
	Adherence to family values and relationships	6.53	6	8	2.07	58.6	39.3	2.1
	Traditional-historical value	9.71	10	7	2.22	1	47.1	51.9
	Total	51.82	52	50	7.05	21.6	53.9	24.5

Based on the results in Table 2 and the Pearson test, a statistically significant negative correlation was observed between adherence to cultural values and the extent of social media usage ($r = -0.446$), self-expression on social media ($r = -0.368$), and social snacking ($r = -0.396$) at a 95% confidence interval with a significance level of $sig = 0.000$. This indicates that individuals who spend considerable time on social media, possess a desire to express themselves, and use social media to graze on appealing and entertaining content exhibit lower levels of adherence to cultural values. Consequently, they demonstrate a reduced sense of social commitment and responsibility, exhibit less honesty in their behavior and speech, prioritize their personal and material gains over traditional-historical values, and display less concern for family values and relationships while preferring free and individualistic relationships. Conversely, a statistically significant positive correlation was observed between adherence to cultural values and engagement with content aligned with Iranian cultural values ($r = 0.591$). This implies that individuals who consciously engage on social media in accordance with their cultural values and utilize this platform purposefully

exhibit higher levels of adherence to cultural values. As a result, they demonstrate greater social commitment and responsibility, exhibit more honesty in their behavior, prioritize collective interests, and display greater concern for family relationships, family opinions, and traditional-historical values.

Table 2
Pearson's Test Between Social Media Engagement Style and Adherence to Cultural Values

Social media engagement style		Extent of social media usage	Engagement in content aligned with Iranian cultural values	Self-expression on social media	Social snacking
Adherence to cultural values	<i>r</i>	−0.446	0.591	−0.368	−0.396
	<i>sig</i>	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

Discussion

The rise of social media has solidified its position as the premier platform for social interaction, particularly among digital natives. This study, in line with previous research (Ashayeri et al., 2024; Tabatabaei et al., 2024), confirms that social media has emerged as a primary platform for socialization, with its influence extending far beyond mere communication, particularly among digital natives. Instead, it has been shown to transform, solidify, restructure, and reform the cultural value systems of digital citizens at both the individual and societal levels. Through the manifestation of images, symbols, behavioral styles, and responses, social media content exerts a profound influence on digital citizens' value frameworks. Notably, social media has the potential to both reinforce and challenge cultural values, underscoring the importance of examining its impact on digital citizenship.

Based on the research findings, there is a significant negative correlation between the frequency of social media usage and adherence to cultural values ($r = -0.446$) among Iranian digital natives, which is consistent with the results of previous studies (Abbasi, 2020; Mele et al., 2021; Rezaei Kamal Abad, 2023; Rezapour, 2020; Tabatabaei et al., 2024). In essence, the use of social media, similar to any new media, has the potential to influence the cultural values of a society, particularly among Iranian digital natives who are heavy users of these platforms (Khajeheian et al., 2020). This research finds that digital natives who frequently engage with social media and maintain an ongoing presence on these applications are more likely to adopt the values and trends prevalent in these digital environments. This phenomenon may prompt a re-evaluation and modification of the cultural values originally instilled in them by society (Abbasi, 2020). Consequently, due to the significant time spent on social media, these individuals often do not feel a strong social commitment or sense of responsibility and are more inclined to engage with popular topics in virtual spaces and global culture rather than focusing on national identity (Tabatabaei, 2020). As noted by Rezaei Kamal Abad (2023) and Tabatabaei et al. (2024), addictive and

continuous use of social media can lead to the acceptance of propagandistic values and a decline in adherence to family values and relationships. Moreover, excessive social media use can lead to information overload, contributing to an increase in fake narratives (Menczer & Hills, 2020). All these factors suggest a pressing need for media literacy education for digital natives that fosters balanced social media consumption to cultivate healthier and more responsible digital citizens and promote a culturally aware digital environment (Mihailidis & Thevenin, 2013).

Furthermore, findings corroborated by other studies suggest that social media plays a significant role in promoting and educating society about values. This influence can lead to a decrease in adherence to traditional cultural values and a shift in people's perspectives (Abbasi, 2020; Mele et al., 2021). The objectivity, realism, and diverse nature of social media allow users to have different and varied experiences of life, ultimately influencing their value-related decisions. As Rogers argues, the modern world and the process of modernization contribute to the adoption of rational and material values by digital citizens (Rogers, 2006). The more time an individual spends in this virtual space, the stronger their interest and attachment to it become. They are increasingly influenced by an environment that continually promotes individualistic and materialistic values. The extent of this influence varies based on the individual's societal context and the degree to which they have internalized their traditional cultural values (Vakilha, 2013).

Moreover, according to Goffman, social media serves as a comprehensive platform for showcasing users' lives and constructed identities, enabling them to express themselves and adapt to the evolving realities of human interaction with technology across different eras (Goffman, 1956/2013). In particular, social media has become a profound reflection of global realities and the ways in which digital natives engage with technology, influencing and shaping their modes of representation and values (Abbasi, 2020). This platform has significantly impacted individuals and has the potential to engender a diminished sense of belonging and reduced reliance on cultural values (Rezaei Kamal Abad, 2023).

The results reveal a negative correlation ($r = -0.368$) between self-expression on social media and adherence to cultural values. From Goffman's perspective, self-expression on social media represents a fundamental need to attain an artificial and ideal identity, serving as an escape for individuals who have not internalized societal values and struggle to embrace them. Additionally, Mele et al. (2021) argue that the promotion of self-centered perspectives and individualistic values on social media may undermine communal values, with the popularity of a post's creator influencing the attitudes and values of their audience. Consequently, individuals assimilate these cultural precepts and values through their engagement with such content (Jahromi & Taghiabadi, 2019). According to Rezapour (2020), social media serves as a platform for the creation of influencer personas and the conspicuous display of luxurious lifestyles, both of which rely heavily on visual representation. To attract and retain their audience, influencers consistently present an aesthetically pleasing and skillful façade that often contradicts cultural and societal norms. This performative existence not only undermines established constructs and manipulates the emotions of digital natives,

leading to emotional discord, but also exposes intimate relationships. Moreover, the unrestrained and affective nature of this environment contributes to the erosion of traditional and familial values (Tabatabaei et al., 2024).

The current research reveals a significant negative correlation between social snacking and adherence to cultural norms ($r = -0.396$) among Iranian digital natives. This finding indicates that individuals who tend to use social media for entertainment purposes, such as grazing on content, are less likely to uphold their cultural norms and values. This finding aligns with the outcomes of prior studies (Beyranvandzadeh et al., 2019; Mele et al., 2021; Rezapour, 2020). Social snacking behavior can be characterized as novelty-seeking, where individuals continuously search for new and engaging content to consume. According to Rogers' theory of innovation adoption, novelty seekers are more inclined to embrace new innovations, including those found on social media platforms. In this context, social snacking may enable individuals to explore and adopt new values and trends presented on these platforms, potentially leading to a decline in adherence to traditional cultural norms. Additionally, social snacking is relatively low-commitment, allowing individuals to easily switch between various types of content. This ease of access may encourage users to prioritize entertainment and novelty over the commitment required to maintain traditional cultural values. Furthermore, when individuals engage in social snacking, they may experience cognitive dissonance due to exposure to conflicting values and beliefs. This dissonance can further contribute to a decrease in adherence to established cultural norms. When individuals are targeted for their cultural beliefs or practices, it can lead to self-censorship and a reluctance to openly express their cultural identity. This can contribute to a climate of fear and intolerance, ultimately affecting the preservation and promotion of diverse cultural values.

The present study further elucidates the relationship between types of social media activity and adherence to cultural values, revealing a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.591$) between engagement with content that aligns with Iranian cultural values and adherence to those values. This finding is consistent with the results of other studies (Beyranvandzadeh et al., 2019; Rezaei Kamal Abad, 2023; Rezapour, 2020), thereby supporting the notion that social media can effectively enhance digital natives' understanding of cultural values and promote the preservation of cultural heritage. According to Rezapour (2020), social media functions as a platform that enhances users' knowledge and awareness of the cultural values of diverse communities. This includes insights into a country's conditions, native culture, and various ethnic and cultural values. Social media allows digital natives to gain a more authentic and realistic understanding of the world, thereby facilitating the effective introduction and development of cultural elements and values (Rezapour, 2020). This harmonization of cultural values on social media is a testament to the platform's growing influence and the digital natives' increasing trust in social media (Khajeheian et al., 2020). By republishing cultural elements and values, social media has the potential to shape and mold cultural identity, thereby contributing to the preservation of cultural heritage and the dissemination of cultural values among digital natives (Vakilha, 2013). Rogers emphasizes the

significance of social networks in diffusing and fostering shared ways of perceiving and selecting events. With the increased activity and production of content in social media, it is possible to influence the direction of cultural values and mitigate the one-sided influence of global media (Gasabi & Naghibulsadat, 2015). By fostering motivation among digital natives for cultural activities and stimulating emotions, social media can enhance public mobilization and participation, which is a key factor in the sustainability of culture. Supporting opinion leaders, as noted by Rogers, who are active and purposeful users, social media can effectively showcase both the historical and current state of society while promoting moral and cultural values such as friendship, respect for parents, and honesty. These efforts have the potential to shape digital natives' attitudes toward cultural values.

Therefore, the present study's findings suggest that social media may be a double-edged sword concerning cultural values. While excessive use may lead to cultural homogenization, engaging and appealing content can promote cultural preservation. Future studies should examine how we can balance these competing forces to ensure the preservation of cultural heritage in the digital age. Further research could explore the mechanisms through which social media platforms influence the cultural values of digital natives, as well as potential strategies for leveraging these platforms to promote shared cultural values and foster a more cohesive society of digital citizens. Additionally, future studies can compare research conducted in other cultural contexts, such as among international students and community-based organizations, to identify similarities and differences in the influence of social media engagement on cultural value adherence, thereby contributing to a broader understanding of the role of social media in shaping cultural values across diverse populations.

The results suggest that social media can both reinforce and challenge cultural values, highlighting the significant impact of social media on cultural values among Iranian digital natives as digital citizens. This study contributes to our understanding of the complex relationship between social media and cultural values in the digital age. Based on the findings of this study, to mitigate the potential negative effects of excessive social media on cultural values, we recommend developing a media literacy framework that promotes responsible and balanced social media use among digital natives. As digital citizens become more aware of the potential impact of social media on cultural values, they are likely to become more conscious of their online actions and the possible costs they may have on themselves and others. This heightened awareness fosters a sense of responsibility, encouraging users to think twice before engaging with content that may undermine their cultural values or those of their peers. Educational programs can incorporate discussions on the characteristics of culturally valuable content and their societal impact. This approach helps individuals become more discerning consumers of content, enabling them to recognize and resist the influence of self-centered perspectives and individualistic values that may undermine communal values. Additionally, it is crucial for media policymakers to develop culturally relevant and engaging content on social media platforms that align with national culture and values. This can be achieved by

leveraging social media platforms to promote shared cultural values and create opportunities for social interaction and engagement. By doing so, social media can play a key role in promoting cultural preservation and adherence to cultural norms. Furthermore, monitoring and regulating social media content can help mitigate the potential negative effects of social media on cultural values. It is essential to elucidate the mechanisms involved in this process, including the establishment of community guidelines, content moderation practices, algorithmic oversight, and user reporting systems. Moreover, we must acknowledge the complexities surrounding these mechanisms, particularly the need to balance censorship with freedom of expression, as well as the implications for cultural preservation.

Conclusion

The unlocalized nature of social media's structure and content poses significant challenges to national and ethnic cultures, potentially undermining them. This occurs through selective portrayals of events, the creation of pseudo-realities, the establishment of virtual realms, and the dissemination of curated impressions. Additionally, social media manipulates concepts of time and space, curates artistic appeal, offers diverse program formats, ensures content homogeneity and continuity, and selectively processes subjects. Opinion leaders on social media constantly propagate their desired cultural values. This research indicates that while excessive social media use and social snacking challenge traditional cultural values and may lead to cultural homogenization, social media can also serve as a medium that disseminates cultural values, stimulates intellectual engagement, and fosters an interactive environment aligned with Iranian culture. This can contribute positively to the preservation and perpetuation of social and cultural values. However, without careful consideration of digital natives' consumption patterns and styles, as well as the implementation of effective media literacy education and measures, this digital space risks becoming a breeding ground for virtual hooliganism and the erosion of cultural values. Policymakers, by promoting culturally relevant content, fostering a sense of community, monitoring and regulating content, and conducting further research, can harness the potential of social media to promote shared cultural values and foster a more cohesive society.

References

- Abbasi, M. (2020). *Naqsh rasanah hiay ajthmaaay baar arazsh hiay ajthmaaay (mthalaah mooraday shahraondan baalaiay 18 saaal shahar thahraan)* [The role of social media on social values (a case study of citizens over 18 years of age in Tehran)] [Unpublished Doctoral dissertation]. Islamic Azad University, North Tehran Branch.
- Abramova, S. B., Antonova, N. L., Campa, R., & Popova, N. G. (2022). Digital fears experienced by young people in the age of technoscience. *Changing Societies & Personalities*, 6(1), 56–78. <https://doi.org/10.15826/csp.2022.6.1.163>

Ahn, J., & Jung, Y. (2016). The common sense of dependence on smartphone: A comparison between digital natives and digital immigrants. *New Media & Society*, 18(7), 1236–1256. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444814554902>

Ali Akbari, S., & Saborikhosroshahi, H. (2018). Moghaayeseh beyn arzesh-haaye vaaledein va farzandaan (Mored motaaleh: Kolieh khaanevadeh-haaye daaraaye farzand 30–15 saal saaken shahr Tehraan) [Comparison of parent and child values (Case study: All families with children aged 15–30 living in Tehran)]. *Journal of Socio-Cultural Changes*, 15(1), 97–133. <https://sanad.iau.ir/en/Journal/aukh/Article/545032?jid=545032>

Ashayeri, T., Menati, A., Jahanparvar, T., & Aqazadeh, P. (2024). Mathalaaah naqsh rasanah wa shabkahhiay ajthmaaay daar thaghyeeraath hweeth darahngay ieeraanyan: Maraoar thaareekhee-thjrabay daadhhiay saanwyaah [Examining the role of media and social networks on changes in the cultural identity of Iranians: A historical-empirical review of secondary data]. *Communication Research*, 31(118), 183–213. https://cr.iribresearch.ir/article_715490.html?lang=en

Balinska-Ourdeva, V. (2015). 21st century learners: Economic humanism and the marginalization of wisdom. In A. A. Abdi, L. Shultz, & T. Pillay (Eds.), *Decolonizing global citizenship education* (pp. 179–188). Sense. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6300-277-6_15

Bar, S. (2004). *Iran: Cultural values, self-images and negotiation behavior*. The Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) Herzliya, Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy, Institute for Policy and Strategy.

Beheshti, S., Heydari, A., & Modaberneghad, A. (2020). Madal saazay thaaseer rasanah ha baar anthzaraath naqsh janseethay moorad mathalaaah: Afraad 15 saal ba baalaaiy shahar yasoj [Modeling the impacts of media on gender role expectations (Case study: 15-year-old and older people in Yasouj City)]. *Strategic Research on Social Problems*, 10(2), 73–98. <https://doi.org/10.22108/srsp.2021.129303.1717>

Beyranvandzadeh, M., Mansouri, M., & Molaei, H. (2018). Thaaseer daziay majazay daar thraweey arazsh hiay darahngay, moorad pazhwahee: Asthan Larasthan [The impact of cyberspace in promoting cultural values, case study: Lorestan Province]. *Geography and Human Relations*, 1(3), 648–663. https://www.gahr.ir/article_82509.html?lang=en

Bowen, S. A. (2013). Using classic social media cases to distill ethical guidelines for digital engagement. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 28(2), 119–133. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08900523.2013.793523>

Gasabi, F., & Naghibulsadat, S. R. (2015). Naghsh arzeshhaaye farhangi dar mohtavaaye shab khaye ejtema'i (Motaale'at tatbighi mohtavaaye shab khaye ejtema'i iraani va gheyreiraani) [The role of cultural values in the context of social networks (A comparative study of Iranian or content of social networks)]. *Interdisciplinary Studies in Media and Culture*, 5(1), 83–109. https://mediastudy.ihcs.ac.ir/article_1743.html?lang=en

Goffman, E. (2013). *Namood khaod daar zandgay rozmraah* [The presentation of self in everyday life] (7th ed.; M. Kianpour, Trans.). Nashremarkaz. (Originally published in English 1956)

Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. Basic Books.

Heath, M. (2020, November 24). *Digital citizenship*. Oxford Bibliographies. <https://doi.org/10.1093/obo/9780199756810-0264>

Hofstede, G. (1980). Culture and organizations. *International Studies of Management & Organization*, 10(4), 15–41. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00208825.1980.11656300>

Hosseini, S. M. (2021). Diyaalektik Samimiat va Ehteraam dar yek goft-vagoi televiziooni [Dialectics of Samimiat ('cordiality') and Ehterām ('respect') in a television talk]. *Journal of Researches in Linguistics*, 14(2), 131–152. <https://doi.org/10.22108/jrl.2023.137291.1746>

Inglehart, R. (2015). *The silent revolution: Changing values and political styles among Western publics*. Princeton University Press.

Iorga, M., Soponaru, C., Muraru, I.-D., Socolov, S., & Petrariu, F.-D. (2020). Factors associated with acculturative stress among international medical students. *BioMed Research International*, 2020(1), Article 2564725. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2020/2564725>

Jahromi, J., & Taghiabadi, M. (2019). Setaarehaaye khord iraani dar ghaab salafi: motaaleh neshanehshenaakhti shohrat khord dar Inastagaram [Iranian microcelebrities in the Selfie Frame: The semiotic study of microcelebrity in Instagram]¹. *Journal of Culture-Communication Studies*, 20(46), 113–156. https://www.jccs.ir/article_92684.html?lang=en

Jamwal, B. S. (2015). Values and social media. *Shabd–Braham*, 3(12), 34–39. <https://www.shabdbraham.com/ShabdB/v3i12.php?mode=English>

Khajeheian, D., Salavatian, S., Kolli, S., & Yazdani, A. (2020). Olgoi raftaari nasl boomiyaan dijitaal iraani dar Inastagaram: Daadeh-kaavi dar kalaan daadeh-haaye shabakeh ejtema'i [Behavior pattern of Iranian digital natives on Instagram: A data mining of social networks]¹. *Communication Research*, 27(101), 9–32. <https://doi.org/10.22082/cr.2020.117695.1961>

Khezri, Z., Shaverdi, T., & Ghasemi, A. (2022). Taesir resaneh-haaye jam'i dar baaznamaayi enteghaal arzesh-haaye farhangi ejtema'i zanaan [The impact of mass media on representing the transmission of women's socio-cultural values]. *Human Sciences Elite Discourse*, 5(10), 5–26. https://gnoe.bou.ac.ir/article_72727.html?lang=en

¹ Instagram™ is a trademark of Instagram Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. По решению Роскомнадзора, социальная сеть Instagram полностью заблокирована в России как экстремистская организация.

Mahdizadeh, S. M. (2017). *Nazarieh-haaye resaaaneh andisheh-haaye raayej va didgaah-haaye enteghaadi* [Media theory, popular ideas, and critical perspectives] (6th ed.). Hamshahri Publishing House.

Mele, E., Kerkhof, P., & Cantoni, L. (2021). Analyzing cultural tourism promotion on Instagram: A cross-cultural perspective.² *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 38(3), 326–340. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2021.1906382>

Menczer, F., & Hills, T. (2020). Information overload helps fake news spread, and social media knows it. *Scientific American*, 323(6), 54–61. <https://doi.org/10.1038/scientificamerican1220-54>

Mihailidis, P., & Thevenin, B. (2013). Media literacy as a core competency for engaged citizenship in participatory democracy. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 57(11), 1611–1622. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764213489015>

Mohamadi, J., Daneshmehr, H., & Sobhani, P. (2020). Masraf imejhehye bedan dar miyan kaarbaraan Inastagaram dar shahr Sanndaj [The consumption of body images by Instagram users in Sanandaj]². *Sociology of Culture and Art*, 2(3), 115–141. <https://doi.org/10.34785/J016.2021.688>

Mossberger, K., Tolbert, C. J., & McNeal, R. S. (2007). *Digital citizenship: The Internet, society, and participation*. MIT Press.

Ng, W.-K., Chen, C.-L., & Huang, Y.-H. (2024). Revitalization of cultural heritage in the digital era: A case study in Taiwan. *Urban Resilience and Sustainability*, 2(3), 215–235. <https://doi.org/10.3934/urs.2024011>

Panchal, P., & Mago, B. (2024). Social media as a tool for cultural preservation among diaspora communities. *International Journal for Global Academic & Scientific Research*, 3(3), 14–20.

Pitsillides, S., Jefferies, J., & Conreen, M. (2012). Museum of the self and digital death: An emerging curatorial dilemma for digital heritage. In E. Giaccardi (Ed.), *Heritage and social media: Understanding heritage in a participatory culture* (pp. 56–68). Routledge.

Pourkiani, M. (2016). *Arzesh haaye farhangi va hoghoogh 'omoomi* [Cultural values and public rights]. Imam Sadeqh University.

Rogers, R. A. (2006). From cultural exchange to transculturation: A review and reconceptualization of cultural appropriation. *Communication theory*, 16(4), 474–503.

Rashid, S. F., & Qasha, R. P. (2022, March). Extracting and archiving data from social media to support cultural heritage preservation in Nineveh. In *Proceedings of the International Conference on Computer Science and Software Engineering (CSASE)* (pp. 295–300). IEEE. <https://doi.org/10.1109/CSASE51777.2022.9759782>

² Instagram™ is a trademark of Instagram Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. По решению Роскомнадзора, социальная сеть Instagram полностью заблокирована в России как экстремистская организация.

Razazi, M., Ghadami, M., Azizabadi Farahani, F., & Hajiani, E. (2024). Shenaasaayi 'avaamel amu'sar bar hefz va tahkim khaanevadeh Esaalmi-Iraani [Identifying the factors affecting the preservation and consolidation of the Islamic-Iranian family]. *National Studies Journal*, 25(97), 53–81. https://www.rjnsq.ir/article_197087.html?lang=en

Rezaei Kamal Abad, S. (2023). *Naghsh platform Inastagram bar farhang paziri kaarbaraan majaazi (Mored motaaleh: Kaarbaraan 17 ta 25 saaleh)* [The role of the Instagram platform on the acculturation of virtual users (Case study: Users 17 to 25 years old)]³ [Unpublished Master's thesis]. Islamic Azad University, North Tehran Branch.

Rezapour, N. (2020). *Barresi jaameeh-shenaakhti taesir vijhegi-haaye moderniteh bar arzesh-haaye ghomi va farhangi* [Sociological study of the impact of modernity characteristics on ethnic and cultural values] [Unpublished Doctoral dissertation]. Islamic Azad University, North Tehran Branch.

Sadiku, M. N., Tembely, M., & Musa, S. M. (2018). Digital citizenship. *International Journal of Advanced Research in Computer Science and Software Engineering*, 8(5), 18–20.

Schwartz, S. H. (1992). Universals in the content and structure of values: Theoretical advances and empirical tests in 20 countries. In M. P. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 25, pp. 1–65). Academic Press. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601\(08\)60281-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601(08)60281-6)

Seraj, M. (2012). We create, we connect, we respect, therefore we are: Intellectual, social, and cultural value in online communities. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 26(4), 209–222. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2012.03.002>

Sumskaya, A. (2023). “Lost” Russian media generations in a changing social and digital environment. *Changing Societies & Personalities*, 7(1), 88–112. <https://doi.org/10.15826/csp.2023.7.1.220>

Tabatabaei, S. (2020). Investigating the role of cultural globalization on youth national identity. *Functional Aspects of Intercultural Communication, Translation and Interpreting Issues*, 7, 57–66. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2686-8199-2020-7-57-66>

Tabatabaei, S., Bulgarova, B. A., Kotecha, K., Patil, S., Volkova, I. I., & Barabash, V. V. (2024). Digital citizenship and paradigm shift in generation Z's emotional communication: Social media's role in shaping Iranian familial bonds. *Journal of Infrastructure, Policy and Development*, 8(7), Article 5443. <https://doi.org/10.24294/jipd.v8i7.5443>

Vakilha, S. (2013). Taasir fazaaye majaazi bar hoviat farhangi [The impact of cyberspace on cultural identity]. *Sociological Studies of Iran*, 3(9), 63–75. <https://sanad.iau.ir/en/Journal/ssi/Article/522279?jid=522279>

³ Instagram™ is a trademark of Instagram Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. По решению Роскомнадзора, социальная сеть Instagram полностью заблокирована в России как экстремистская организация.

Windhal, S. R., Signitzer, B. H., & Olson, J. T. (1992). *Using communication theory: An introduction to planned communication*. SAGE.

Vodanovich, S., McKenna, B., & Cai, W. (2017). Cultural values inherent in the design of social media platforms: A case study of WeChat. In A. Pucihar, M. Kljajić Borštnar, C. Kittl, P. Ravesteijn, R. Clarke, & R. Bons (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 30th Bled eConference "Digital transformation—From connecting things to transforming our lives," June 18–21, 2017, Bled, Slovenia* (pp. 617–627). University of Maribor Press. <https://aisel.aisnet.org/bled2017/8>

Zhang, H., Tian, M., & Hung, T. K. (2020). Cultural distance and cross-border diffusion of innovation: A literature review. *Academia Revista Latinoamericana de Administración*, 33(2), 241–260. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ARLA-10-2018-0239>



ARTICLE IN THE SPECIAL SECTION

The *Fiesta* and the *Cerro*. Rocksi Broadcasting on Social Media From Xaamkējxp

Elena Nava Morales

National Autonomous University of Mexico, Mexico City, Mexico

ABSTRACT

This work presents the case of a young woman Rocksi, who works with social media and has a strong influence in her region. She lives in Xaamkējxp, Oaxaca, in the southwest state of Mexico. Her work shows us both the religious customs and the politics of the communities through live transmissions on her Facebook¹ and YouTube profiles. In 2024, she transmitted several celebrations in Xaamkējxp related to religious celebrations as she was invited to help a family that had a *comisionados de festejo cargo*. Rocksi filmed various activities illustrating the importance of ethnic religious practices in the community and the strength and vitality of the religious and political *cargos*. In the text, I will delve deeper into the topic through ethnographic description.

KEYWORDS

Indigenous people, México, *fiesta*, Ayuujk, social media

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This work was supported by Programa de Apoyos para la Superación del Personal Académico de la UNAM (PASPA) 2023—DGAPA.

Introduction

Over the last three decades the literature about cyberspace and Indigenous peoples has increased. In Latin America, several academics from anthropology,

¹ Facebook™ is a trademark of Facebook Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. По решению Роскомнадзора, социальная сеть Facebook в России признана экстремистской организацией и заблокирована.

communication sciences, and sociology are researching the appropriation of digital technologies, media (radio, TV, cinema), and digital media by Indigenous peoples. The central themes of these works relate to the strengthening of Indigenous languages in cyberspace (Lee, 2006; Parffa, 2001; Pietikäinen, 2008; Warschauer, 2000), ethnopolitical claims (de la Guardia, 2018), the dissemination of customs and traditions for the reproduction of community values (Orobitg, 2020; Wilson & Stewart, 2008), among others.

From an anthropological perspective, Landzelius (2006) shows how ethnic minorities currently circulating on the Web have had to deal with various problems to overcome the digital gap. A first approach to the literature in Mexico, for example, revealed that one of the central issues in studies among Indigenous peoples using the Internet is accessing cyberspace. Many rural and Indigenous families and communities in Mexico are still far from having access (Winocur & Sánchez, 2015).

Even despite this panorama, there has been a strong and rapid growth in the cyberspace of Indigenous peoples. Prins (2001) gave a broad overview of what is still happening with ethnic minorities around the globe:

Although Indigenous peoples are proportionally underrepresented in cyberspace—for obvious reasons such as economic poverty, technological inexperience, linguistic isolation, political repression, and/or cultural resistance—the Internet has vastly extended traditional networks of information and communication. Greatly enhancing the visibility of otherwise marginal communities and individuals, the information superhighway enables even very small and isolated communities to expand their sphere of influence and mobilize political support in their struggles for cultural survival. In addition to maintaining contact with their own communities, Indigenous peoples also use the Internet to connect with other such widely dispersed groups in the world. Today, it is not unusual for a Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland to go on the Internet and communicate with individuals belonging to other remote groups such as the Maori in New Zealand, Saami in Norway, Kuna in Panama, or Navajo in Arizona. Together with the rest of us, they have pioneered across the new cultural frontier and are now surfing daily through Cyberia. (Prins, 2001, p. 308)

The case we will look at in this text is based on research conducted 20 years after Prins' opinion (2001). Apparently, the world has changed; however, some of the characteristics he mentions about Indigenous peoples, especially in Latin America, are still legitimate, such as cultural resistance, political repression, economic poverty, and linguistic isolation. Although what Prins calls "technological inexperience" is not applicable to many young people from Indigenous groups in Mexico. On the contrary, currently, Indigenous youth are familiar with technology, as evidenced by several studies on the use of the Internet and smartphones in Indigenous communities (Kummels, 2018; Nava Morales, 2019). Rocksí is an example of this generation of young people who handle technology with dexterity and speed.

This text is methodologically supported by fieldwork in Xaamkējxp² (since 2001), direct observation, several in-depth interviews with Rocksī and Paco, observation of Rocksī's Facebook³ profile since 2019 and, more recently, I have also followed Rocksī's TikTok⁴ page. I have worked on Rocksī's life story and systematized all the interviews I have had with her.

In 2001, the first time I visited Xaamkējxp, I was conducting my undergraduate research and stayed for thirteen months in the community to ethnographically study the practices that young people had on the Internet in the local high school. From 2001 to the present, my visits to the village have been frequent and lately they have involved collaborative research or student internships that I conduct in coordination with the municipal authorities. Since 2019, I have travelled two to four times annually to the community, and the visits lasted approximately five to 15 days. It all depends on the activities of the community and the obligations I have at the University and with my students. In 2024, I travelled to Xaamkējxp twice, in May (three days) and in August (12 days). I conducted the first interview with Rocksī and her partner Francisco (Paco) in 2019 in the community. In 2020, we were unable to carry out interviews due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, we succeeded in having three recorded talks to construct Rocksī's life story. In 2022, 2023, and 2024 we did four more interviews. The reunions were more frequent, and I was able to join Rocksī at different events and festivities from which she broadcast. For this text I have worked with data mainly corresponding to the year 2024.

This text is divided into six parts: the introduction, the first part where I review the literature on *cargos* and *fiestas* in the region known as Mesoamerica, and the second part where I discuss *cargos* and *fiestas* from the perspective of the community giving meaning to all ethnographic description present in this text. In the third part I introduce Rocksī and detail some aspects of her life. The fourth section describes the climb up the *cerro* of the *comisionados de festejo*⁵ accompanied by Rocksī. Finally, I conclude with some insights on the importance of the Ayuujkization of Facebook³.

The Cargo and the Fiesta

The literature on the *cargo* and *fiesta* in Mesoamerica is extensive. Most of this material, during the first 60 years of the 20th century, was produced by American anthropologists who transformed Mexico into their "ethnographic paradise." The political and social organization of non-Western peoples, including Indigenous communities, is one of the fundamental themes in anthropology, as is kinship. It is therefore clear that the

² I will call the village of Santa María Tlahuitoltepec Mixe in the inhabitants' own language, that is Xaamkējxp.

³ Facebook™ is a trademark of Facebook Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. По решению Роскомнадзора, социальная сеть Facebook в России признана экстремистской организацией и заблокирована.

⁴ TikTok is a trademark of ByteDance, registered in China and other countries. TikTok has suspended all new posting and live-streaming for users in the Russian Federation.

⁵ Throughout the text I will use the words "käptän" and "comisionados de festejo" interchangeably to refer to the latter.

phenomenon in the Mesoamerican region has fascinated anthropologists for almost a hundred years.

More than four decades ago, anthropologists Chance and Taylor (1985) successfully recognized four American “generations” of studies of the *cargo*, *fiesta*, or *mayordomía* system. Each generation theoretically interpreted the system in different ways. The general structure of these generations was established from the 1930s to the early 1950s, and were ethnographies carried out in Guatemala among the highland Mayans (Bunzel, 1952; Tax, 1937; Wagley, 1949).

Later, between 1950 and the early 1960s (second generation), there were the works of Wolf (1959), Cámara (1952), and Nash (1958) with approaches oriented towards thinking of the *cargo* and *fiesta* system as a socioeconomic regulator and a communal protection device in the face of external entities. Harris (1964) criticized this interpretation of the system, arguing that it was hierarchical and did not produce any socioeconomic regulation. Furthermore, he argued that the cargo system did not function as a communal protection device, but as a repressive institution implemented by the Catholic Church in Indigenous communities (Chance & Taylor, 1985).

In the third generation of scholars, Frank Cancian (1965) stood out and proposed the religious cargo system balanced wealth in the community, but also produced stratification and legitimized existing economic differences (Cancian, 1967, p. 292). Several authors (DeWalt, 1975; Greenberg, 1981) refuted Cancian’s thesis on stratification, as it did not correspond to the religious cargo system.

In the fourth generation, attention focused on the influence of external conditions of the community and no longer on the stratification or horizontality of the *fiesta* system. Some of the authors representing this generation include Aguirre Beltrán (1967), Diener (1978), Dow (1977), Greenberg (1981), Jones (1981), Chance and Taylor (1985), and Smith (1977), etc.

In these debates on the religious cargos system, the importance of the pre-Hispanic and colonial antecedents of Indigenous societies emerged several times. One of the first efforts to analyze the issue was Carrasco’s work (1961). He discussed the continuities and discontinuities of pre-Hispanic elements in these systems. The Indigenous societies in the Mesoamerican region have also transformed over time, adding, eliminating, or absorbing elements in their political, economic, and social structures.

For the four generations of American scholars, the system of *cargos* and *fiestas* is composed of the following elements: civil and religious hierarchy, and *mayordomía* or *comisionados* of the *fiestas*. In this text, I will specifically discuss a case focusing on the latter, the *comisionados de festejo*. As mentioned earlier, it is essential to make it clear that the *mayordomías* or *comisionados de festejo* are an organizational structure that is constantly changing. The invention of “new traditions,” the emergence of new financial actors, the breakdown of the civic-religious cargo system with the entry of political parties or other religions, and the incorporation of elements of “modernity” create a complex network of relationships.

This was highlighted by Chance and Taylor forty years ago and still prevails today:

The current cargo system is changing in new and different ways However, we believe that the historical analysis we offer here elucidates the interpretative problems that continue to emerge in ethnographic studies. Neither approach reflects the complexity of the institution. When we look at the cargo system as a process and not as a category, we find that important changes have occurred in its operating and these have been related to other also important transformations in the structure. The variation in time is as significant as the variation in space. Both appear to be greater than we thought a few years ago. (Chance & Taylor, 1985, p. 22)

Until now, we have only reviewed an account of hegemonic American anthropology thoughts about Mesoamerican communities and their “*cargo* and *fiesta* systems.” Although this literature shed light on the question, the demand for more knowledge on the issue remained latent. Mexican anthropology itself, as a generator of knowledge about its own local realities, discussed the topic and during the last 30 years of the 20th century it can be observed that anthropological research carried out in Mexican universities strongly emphasized the *cargos* of the communities and the *fiestas*.

The Fiesta, the Cargos, and Comunalidad

The ethnopoltical movements and the powerful emergence of ethnic identities in the 1970s and 1980s in Latin America encouraged people from Indigenous communities to migrate to big cities to pursue academic training. Such was the case of Floriberto Díaz Gómez and Jaime Martínez Luna, both Oaxacans from the Sierra Norte. Floriberto, an Ayuujk⁶ from the community of Xaamkējxp, and Jaime, a Zapotec from the community of Guelatao de Juárez. They studied anthropology in Mexico City and Xalapa, Veracruz, respectively. They played a fundamental role in the consolidation of ethnopoltical organizations in their regions and in the generation of knowledge from their own communities.

From an empiricist point of view, Floriberto and Jaime, both being natives of Indigenous communities⁷, succeeded in proposing a way of analyzing the *cargos* and the *fiestas*, from an *emic* vision that allows us to bring together the political, the religious, the work, and the territory in a single, broader theoretical perspective, with a very powerful heuristic potential. It is essential to move away from functionalist analysis where systems are analyzed separately, and a more complex view is developed where all dimensions are interconnected.

⁶ Throughout the text I will use the words “Ayuujk” and “Mixe” interchangeably to refer to the same Indigenous group.

⁷ There is an important debate concerning insider/outsider anthropologists: “The discussion of insider/outsider researchers is addressed by Jones (1980) in an interesting way, as he proposes to emphasize the insider anthropologist’s point of view as the voice of his own group, although he does not rule out the outsider anthropologist’s point of view at any point. Similarly, the anthropologist Narayan (1993) considers her Hindu origin as part of the development of her fieldwork in India and questions the relevance of thinking of herself as a ‘native’ anthropologist when defending the idea of a multiple identity” (Nava Morales & Calderón, 2014, pp. 11–12, Trans. by Elena Nava Morales—E. N. M.).

In the *comunalidad*, as Floriberto and Jaime called it, we observe a mosaic of diverse elements that are continuously related to giving life to the community. The community is the basis for the articulation of the various dimensions, for Floriberto the community is not defined in the abstract but there are elements that turn it into something concrete and give meaning to the dimensions of Ayuujk life:

Any Indigenous community has the following elements: (a) A territorial space, demarcated and defined by possession. (b) A common history, transmitted from one generation to the next. (c) A variant of the people's language, through which we identify our common language. (d) An organization that defines the political, cultural, social, civil, economic, and religious spheres. (e) A community justice system. (Díaz, 2007, p. 38; Trans. by E. N. M.)

In his texts, Díaz shows the community as a tissue of relationships between space-nature and of people with each other. The relationships are revealed through "the underlying and acting energy between human beings among themselves and between human beings and each and every element of nature" (Díaz, 2007, p. 39).

Attributing a relational character to community opens up powerful possibilities for understanding it in diverse spaces and times and between and among different human, non-human, tangible, and intangible entities. The immanence of the community (what is intrinsic to it) would be defined by *comunalidad*, which explains the phenomenal, the tangibility of the community:

Comunalidad expresses universal principles and truths as far as Indigenous society is concerned, which will have to be understood from the beginning not as opposed to, but as different from Western society. To understand each of its elements, some notions must be considered: the communal, the collective, complementarity and integrality. The communal and integral meaning of each part that we seek to understand and explain is central; without it our knowledge will always be limited. (Díaz, 2007, p. 40; Trans. by E. N. M.)

Díaz (2007) does not reproduce the classical binarism such as *Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft* [Community/Society] and highlights the differential character of Indigenous society in relation to Western society. He also emphasizes the aspects that make Indigenous societies distinct. The notion of *comunalidad* is composed of some basic elements that guarantee its understanding: (a) the Earth as Mother and as territory; (b) consensus in the Assembly for decision-making; (c) free service as an exercise of authority; (d) collective work as an act of recreation, and (e) rites and ceremonies as an expression of the communal gift (Díaz, 2007, p. 40).

As we can see, work as the basis of the community's recreation is present in all daily activities. Through continuous hard work, it is possible to sustain the power of the community. During the *fiesta*, the work is not an exception, presenting in each of the activities that compose the festive event. In August 2024, when we were in Xaamkëjxp, Francisco (Paco), Rocksí's partner, told us that although from an external point of view the *fiesta* seems to be all about joy and entertainment, it involves some

other things, including problems. Regardless the joyful atmosphere, there are also disagreements and conflicts due to the differences in character among the assistants of the *comisionados de festejo*. Tensions between people may be calmed down somewhat by family relationships, but the stress of the celebration is always present. The *cargos* also show the work of the community in each *cabildo*, in each authorities change, in each moment experienced during the year, in each community activity.

With this insider theoretical perspective, we cannot separate the *fiesta* from the *cargo* system or rituality from work. All the constituent elements of *comunalidad* play a role in the various communal moments and are interrelated to reproducing the community itself.

Rocksi

R. M., better known as Rocksi, turned 30 in 2024. She is a tall, cheerful woman with great charisma. She was born in Mitla, in the Central Valleys of the state of Oaxaca. Her mother is Zapotec, and her father is Ayuujk. Though Rocksi could currently be considered an influencer, with more than 18,000 followers on Facebook⁸, she calls herself a blogger. She is a content creator who has had various phases over the more than five years she has been generating diverse materials for Facebook⁸, TikTok, and Youtube⁹. Crovi Druetta (2016), studying the interactions of young people in digital social networks, identified and proposed a typology of interaction with four scales: visualizes, moves, modifies, and creates.

Visualizing consists of minimal interaction, where users only visualize in search of new experiences. Transferring consists of disseminating content, they are a sort of replicator of the voices of others. Modifying and transferring involves another level where users have a greater cognitive involvement with the messages. Creating represents an act of originality and a greater involvement of the user with the digital content (Crovi Druetta, 2016, pp. 52–53). It seems to me that Rocksi's profile is very well characterized by the fourth level proposed by Crovi Druetta (2016), as originality and creativity are hallmarks of her content.

In other works, I have proposed that the educational capital of the subjects involved in these activities is also central to their productions, creations, and interests. In Rocksi's case, she attended high school in Xaamkējxp, had a scholarship and practiced dances during her high school years. In addition, her strong and rebellious character makes her always look for and learn new things.

It was in Xaamkējxp where she met Francisco (Paco), her partner, who was studying Community Communication at the Zempoatépetl University, an educational project located in Xaamkējxp. Paco has also been a great influence and support for Rocksi, as he constantly encourages her in her projects. In addition, when it comes to making the broadcasts for which they are hired, Rocksi and Paco function as a synchronized and well-organized team.

⁸ Facebook™ is a trademark of Facebook Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. По решению Роскомнадзора, социальная сеть Facebook в России признана экстремистской организацией и заблокирована.

⁹ YouTube™ is a trademark of Google Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries.

There was a time, between 2020 and 2021, when Rocksi broadcast regional Oaxacan music (as a music program). She was pleasing her audience with songs as a virtual DJ. This type of transmission ended due to a Facebook¹⁰ rule regarding the copyrights of songs used throughout the program. Therefore, she had to end that job and start others. She continued to produce videos about the traditions and customs of Xaamkējxp and Mitla, her hometown. She was also hired several times with Paco to travel to different communities to broadcast basketball games. Basketball is considered the most important sport in the Sierra Norte region of Oaxaca and many people attend the games. Migration and the difficulty of travelling between towns make social networks the best way to watch basketball matches. For this reason, Rocksi and Paco broadcast via Facebook¹⁰ with local, regional, and international sponsorships. Many migrants located in the United States ask Rocksi, Francisco, and their colleagues to broadcast the games. This request is accompanied by the corresponding payments that come as American remittances. In the case of patron saint festivals, they also pay for broadcasts from the north to be able to attend, albeit virtually, the celebrations in their hometowns. Many migrants are never able to return to Mexico for their *fiestas* or to reunite with their families because they are undocumented. In this way, Rocksi's broadcasts allow people to experience their festivities, traditions, regional basketball championships or the daily rituals of their hometowns.

Climbing the Hill on Facebook¹⁰

On August 12, 2024, during the *fiesta* of the Virgin of the Assumption¹¹, Rocksi climbed the hill with the family of the *kāptān*. Being a *comisionados de festejo* has a very important meaning as it allows a person to climb to other more important and prestigious positions in the village. In Xaamkējxp, the positions are hierarchical, a person can move up the hierarchy little by little and slowly gain more and more prestige and positions of greater responsibility and complexity.

Generally, the young people starting as *topiles* (vigilantes or community policemen) are responsible for the security of the village, maintaining order and preventing fights or street brawls. Their boss is the "*mayor de vara*," another higher-ranking position that can only be obtained by people who have already been *comisionados de festejo*. For a whole week a month (with its days and nights), the *mayor de vara* and his wife oversee a group of *topiles* who oversee the security of the village. Being *mayor de vara* is a position of great responsibility, as it involves the care and vigilance of the village, as well as the feeding and care that the *topiles* may require.

The *comisionados de festejo* can wait several years before they become *comisionados*, there is a long waiting list to get there. This position carries the

¹⁰ Facebook™ is a trademark of Facebook Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. По решению Роскомнадзора, социальная сеть Facebook в России признана экстремистской организацией и заблокирована.

¹¹ In Xaamkējxp, there are three major festivals. The first of the year is in May when they celebrate the Ascension of the Lord which is just 40 days after Easter Sunday, the second one is in August, when they celebrate the Virgin of the Assumption and the biggest and most important one on December 12 when they celebrate the Virgin of Guadalupe, patron saint of the town and of all Mexico. She is the main Virgin in the catholic religion in Mexico.

responsibility of hosting and feeding (breakfast, lunch, and dinner) one of the philharmonic bands invited to the *fiesta*, as well as feeding all the people from the village who arrive with the band. The financial outlay is very high and means years of savings. The *comisionados de festejo* need to involve their entire extended family to carry out the celebration. In other words, as soon as they know when they will be *kăptăn*, they start to visit their relatives to ask for help and support in this exhausting task. Generally, the request for help is accompanied by a bottle of mezcal to properly close “the pact” of going to help the *comisionados de festejo* at least 10 or more days before the *fiesta* formally begins.

“Climbing the hill,” as I mentioned at the beginning of this section, is part of the ritual activities to be carried out by the *kăptăn*. The hill is called Zempoatépetl or *li'pxy yukp* (hill of 20 peaks) in Ayuujk, it is in front of the town of Xaamkējxp. It is said that Konk, king of the Mixes, took refuge there after the Spanish intrusions into the territory. Today it is a sacred place with great affluence of the Mixe population in general, especially the highlands population. The path is not easy, many people suffer from knee or back pains due to the efforts of the ascent, but the journey up and down is completed due to the devotion they have to the hill.

Families go to the hill to pray, give thanks, and make offerings for different reasons. In the case of the *comisionados de festejo* of each *fiesta*, they go up the hill to give thanks for having the opportunity to receive the bands and to pray that everything goes well during the days of the *fiesta*. Rocks, being part of the families that were invited months before to help the *kăptăn*, was present in all the respective activities many days before.

On Monday, August 12, 2024, the *comisionados de festejo* went up Zempoatépetl with their families and helpers to perform the corresponding ritual. The appointment was at 3 a.m. to get organized, perform the corresponding rituals in the *kăptăn*'s house and have some bread and *atole* before starting the journey. They departed to the mountain at 5 a.m., took a van that left them in Tejas, an agency of Xaamkējxp that is located right at the foot of the hill, and from there they began the upward trek. They reached the top three hours later, at approximately 9 a.m. They made the necessary thanks and petitions at the highest point of Zempoatépetl and then began the slow descent until they reached Xaamkējxp in the afternoon. In the evening of the same day, a meal was held with all the helpers, family members and guests at the home of the *kăptăn*, as tradition dictates.

* * *

The whole trip to the hill was recorded by Rocks, who uploaded the edited video to Facebook¹², explaining many of the details of the journey. We will stop here to elaborate on the content of the material (Rocks, 2024).

Rocks begins the video by explaining that they arrived at the home of the *comisionados de festejo* where some offerings had already been made (presenting the *xătsy*, which are corn offerings, offering *tepache* and mezcal, and the sacrifice of

¹² Facebook™ is a trademark of Facebook Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. По решению Роскомнадзора, социальная сеть Facebook в России признана экстремистской организацией и заблокирована.

birds). Then they drank *atole* with bread because it was time to get ready to start the journey. The women in charge of the kitchen organized the chilli-smeared tortillas and hard-boiled eggs, the traditional meal when ascending the hill. The men, including Rocksí's partner Francisco (Paco), were also preparing their birds (turkeys or roosters) to take to the hill to be sacrificed.

The group took a van to the Tejas agency with all the things they were carrying (food, mezcal, *tepache*, chickens, roosters, turkeys, and water) and from there they could start the walk. When they arrived at the place where the walk began there were already several vans parked because other *comisionados de festejo* had already arrived to make their offerings¹³.

At one point, Rocksí takes a shot of herself and briefly tells that they are starting the walk, she asks Paco what time it is, and he replies that it is 6:36 a.m. Rocksí excitedly says that this is the second time she will climb the hill.

The images of the people are streaming, everyone is well covered up and loaded with various things, a serrano sound in the background accompanies the video. The images stop, Rocksí's voice comes on and mentions that they are making a first stop at an important place where they rest from the walk and share water and mezcal. There is someone else who is filming and is also accompanying the group. It is Peck, another family member who is also dedicated to audiovisual production and is also filming the ascent to the hill¹⁴. The head of the festival committee (an elderly person of great experience), who is a direct relative of the *comisionados de festejo*, gives a few words in Ayuujk, refers several times to *et nãäjxwii'nyit* (to life, to nature, to the earth) and thanks each of the participants for accompanying the *käptän*.

In the images, the people present are being cleansed with bunches of herbs from the place¹⁵. Rocksí explains that this place is a spiritual site where people clean themselves to leave all the bad energies behind before continuing their ascent. There they also ask for strength to be able to reach the top safely¹⁶. At this time, they had breakfast. The women hand out the tortillas covered with chili, the hard-boiled eggs, and a few pieces of *quesillo* (Oaxacan cheese). Again, the images are shown with Rocksí's voice saying that they must continue, as they are not even halfway up.

¹³ At each village fiesta, there are several *käptän*. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the *comisionados de festejo* increased in number, as the fiestas for the whole of 2020 were cancelled. Then the *comisionados de festejo* of that year joined the *comisionados de festejo* of the year 2021. In other words, between the years 2021 to 2024 each of the three bands coming to Xaamkëjxp are served by 18 *käptän* in total. Each *comisionado de festejo* is responsible for providing food (breakfast, lunch, or dinner) to a band twice during the week of the fiesta. It seems that this will change again in 2025 and it will be back down to only nine families serving the three bands that come to play at the fiesta, i.e., each family will be responsible for feeding a band five times instead of twice during the week of the fiesta.

¹⁴ Peck also has a Facebook page where he frequently uploads his material (Video Producciones Peck, n.d.).

¹⁵ Gently tapping a person's body parts with bundles of twigs and leaves, usually in the case of a spiritual cleansing or temazcal bath.

¹⁶ In her ethnographic accounts of her ascents to the hill, Castillo Cisneros explains that this: "is very necessary and is always done, it is part of a purification that is done to be able to enter what is known as the house of Kontoy on the hill" (Castillo Cisneros, 2021, p. 99).

The voice and the image of Rocksí enter again, saying that they have been there for two hours, she is exhausted and is carrying a chicken in a sack, showing it to the camera. She takes a panoramic shot of the landscapes and assures us that they are spectacular and beautiful. Again, the images run and at 8:57 in the morning, two and a half hours after the start of the walk at 6:36 a.m., Rocksí appears again on camera and says that they are almost at the top and takes a shot of one of the boundaries of the community¹⁷.

On reaching the top, a queue is formed according to the order of arrival of each *comisión de festejo*. Once at the front of the queue, the corresponding offerings are left. At the summit, while waiting for the offerings to begin, Rocksí explains:

They come to the hill of Zempoatépetl to give thanks for all the blessings, for the wellbeing of their family and to pray that their *comisión* passes well, that there are no setbacks and that they spend it in harmony with all their helpers, their families, and their guests. At the end of the offering comes the ritual again, which is *tepache* with red [*wĩnxatsy*], as it is known, and to taste another tortilla with hard-boiled egg and spend some more time there on the hill. (Rocksí, 2024; Trans. by E. N. M.)

After performing offering rituals and socializing in that sacred space, comes the return journey, the descent, although faster, is also tiring and energy demanding. In the video, Rocksí shows the *comisionados de festejo*'s house being decorated by family members who did not go up the hill.

They oversaw setting up the altar where the image of the Virgin of the Assumption would be placed. Later, all the helpers gathered in the house of the *kāptān* and drank the *tepache* with *martajado* corn, which is customary when going to the mountain. Immediately after, they performed a new ritual conducted by the principal of the *fiesta*, who gave a few words in *ayuujk*.

After this comes the *caldo mixe*, which consists of a chicken soup with green beans, accompanied by chilli, onion, coriander, and lemon, as well as a bean tamale. This soup is always eaten after coming down from the hill and is generally prepared with the sacrificed chickens in the house of the *comisionados de festejo*, in the first ritual of dawn, before climbing the hill. At the end of the video, Rocksí closes with a comment:

To end this beautiful day, the *comisionados de festejo* gave some presents to each one of us who are going to be helping during these days of celebration. The women were given these very beautiful handmade shawls, naturally dyed, and the men were given a sweatshirt with a print that, not for nothing, but my friend Paquito and I made [the gifts can be seen in the images in the video]. (Rocksí, 2024; Trans. by E. N. M.)

¹⁷ The *colindancias* are the boundaries between one community and another, marking the limits of one territory and another with large rocks.

This video posted on Facebook¹⁸ on August 13, 2014, received more than 510 reactions, had 32 comments, and was played 27,000 times. It lasts 12.19 minutes. The content of the comments is diverse, with greetings and congratulations to Rocksí. Several people thank Rocksí for the content she uploads because she shares the traditions of the region. They admire the landscapes, the music, and the gastronomy. In addition, several people ask her various questions about when the *calenda* is, if she carried anything during the journey and what was the fate of the chickens that they carried on their backs. One comment caught my attention, it was the first and commented as follows:

The religious cosmovision of the *Ayuujk Jaay* is very remote and very ancient, the spirituality of believing in a supreme protector of the Mixes called King Konkoy ... they give him offerings ... for health, work and for their lives ... is a part of the Mixe theology. (Reyes, 2024; Trans. by E. N. M.)

In the comment, we observe how the spirituality and religious cosmovision of the Mixes is discussed, also mentioning that Kondoy, the king of the Mixes, was born from an egg and was an explorer of distant lands. In Ayuujk thought, Kondoy fought against Montezuma (Aztec emperor) and the Spanish *conquistadores*, preventing both invasions. He is known for his strength, boldness, and protection of people. The Ayuujk earned the nickname “the never conquered” because of Kondoy. He lives on Zempoatépetl, which is why we find so many references to him when ascending the mountain.

Hill climbs are the daily bread of the Ayuujk. It must be understood that the Ayuujk religious system is interconnected with various elements of the Catholic religion that arrived in the region in colonial times, and this discussion is present in the literature we reviewed at the beginning of this text. The ascent to the hill as a fundamental part of the complex Ayuujk religiosity allows us to observe the multiple relationships between diverse entities involved in the community festivities. For this reason, the perspective of *comunalidad* helps in this analysis. Let us return here to the elements that conform *comunalidad*: (a) the Earth as Mother and as territory; (b) consensus in the Assembly for decision-making; (c) free service (cargo communal) as an exercise of authority; (d) collective work as an act of recreation, and (e) rites and ceremonies as an expression of the communal gift. We observe how these elements appear tangibly or intangibly during the ascent to the hill.

The connection established during the rites or ceremonies with the territory and the various elements that compose it (the mountain, the live and sacrificed animals, their blood, the plants, the food, the corn used in the offerings) is given through collective work, not only as an act of recreation, but also as an act of community co-responsibility. In the case examined here, the ascent to the hill took place because of the cargo that had to be executed: to be a *comisionados de festejo* or *käptän*. As I mentioned a few pages back, being a *käptän* requires a lot of money that is

¹⁸ Facebook™ is a trademark of Facebook Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. По решению Роскомнадзора, социальная сеть Facebook в России признана экстремистской организацией и заблокирована.

saved over the years and immense help from the whole extended family, friends, and neighbors. The communal gift is present in the help received from the people close to them, but also from the territory and all its entities to whom the petitions and offerings are destined to be able to complete the cargo with the greatest harmony, solidarity and understanding.

Rocksi's eye and camera allow us to walk alongside her and climb the hill with the *comisionados de festejo*. Rocksi decides to create these contents because she knows the relevance of these rituals and due to her ability to film, edit and upload the content to her Facebook¹⁹ profile it is possible to have access to diverse experiences occurring in Xaamkējxp.

In her content there is no in-depth analysis of the rituals performed by the people, just as *comunalidad*, as an Indigenous theory, does not appear in the everyday discourses of the population. Rocksi knows that *cargos*, the rituals they involve, ceremonies, collective work, and territory are the fundamental elements around which community life in Xaamkējxp rotates and are therefore part of her Facebook¹⁹ contents. The comment I transcribed above shows us how their interlocutors on Facebook¹⁹ are feeding back her publications through a reflection on the vitality of Ayuujk spirituality and cosmovision.

In the past, in the Ayuujk region, it would have been impossible to climb the hill by filming a video and then broadcasting it to an unknown and heterogeneous audience. Now it is possible because of the transformations that the community has undergone, the invention of "new traditions" (such as recording the festivities on video and then watching them several times with the family), the emergence of new actors as the financiers (national or international migrants) and the emergence of young people with leadership and charisma who use digital technologies daily and skillfully, and generally have a high school education that supports them and their connections and social relations go beyond the community.

Conclusion

There are several ideas to conclude this text. First, it is central to highlight the growing use of digital platforms and technologies among Indigenous peoples in Latin America, specifically in Oaxaca. The effective use of media such as radio, television, video, or cinema for more than forty years in the region is part of the history that has led to the varied and innovative uses that Indigenous youth are making of digital platforms today. The second idea has to do with their specific purposes for using these platforms, as they are often linked to the profound importance of communicating with migrant family members (many located in Mexico City or the United States). The main theme of the content of the transmissions is related to religious festivals and all the events that are manifested in them, such as basketball, dances, the different parts of the festival, the *jaripeo*, the box *ranchero* or, as shown in this article, the climb to the hill.

¹⁹ Facebook™ is a trademark of Facebook Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. По решению Роскомнадзора, социальная сеть Facebook в России признана экстремистской организацией и заблокирована.

The third idea considers the transformations that also emerge in the older generations. For example, it is important to say that traditional authority figures support Rocksí's different activities since they think the divulgation of the celebrations by social media is important to reproduce the community and their values, as in the case of the main character who accompanied the *comisionados de festejo*.

Finally, in this case, rather than indigenization of digital technologies (Ginsburg, 2008), we are dealing with an Ayuujkization of Facebook²⁰ that is strongly anchored in the elements that make up *comunalidad*, such as territory, festivals, *tequio*, the cargo system or rituality (Kummels, 2018). In other words, the uses and practices related to digital platforms are determined by the central axes of Ayuujk society in the case considered here.

References

Aguirre Beltrán, G. (1967). *Regiones de refugio* [Regions of refuge]. Instituto Indigenista Interamericano.

Bunzel, R. (1952). *Chichicastenango: A Guatemalan village*. University of Washington Press.

Cámara, F. (1952). Religious and political organization. In S. Tax (Ed.), *Heritage of conquest: The ethnology of Middle America* (pp. 142–173). Free Press.

Cancian, F. (1965). *Economics and prestige in a Maya community: The religious cargo system in Zinacantan*. Stanford University Press.

Cancian, F. (1967). Political and religious organizations. In R. Wauchope & M. Nash (Eds.), *Handbook of Middle American Indians, Vol. 6: Social anthropology* (pp. 283–298). University of Texas Press. <https://doi.org/10.7560/736665-015>

Carrasco, P. (1961). The civil-religious hierarchy in Mesoamerican communities: Pre-Spanish background and colonial development. *American Anthropologist*, 63(3), 483–497.

Castillo Cisneros, M. del C. (2021). *Ser Majääw. Ritualidad Ayuujk en Tlahuitoltepec, Oaxaca* [Being Majääw. Ayuujk in Tlahuitoltepec rituality, Oaxaca]. Enredars.

Chance, J. K., & Taylor, W. B. (1985). Cofradías and Cargos: An historical perspective on the Mesoamerican civil-religious hierarchy. *American Ethnologist*, 12(1), 1–26.

Crovi Druetta, D. (Ed.). (2016). *Redes sociales digitales: Lugar de encuentro, expresión y organización para los jóvenes* [Digital social networks: Meeting place, expression and organization for young people]. Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.

de la Guardia, C. (2018). EZLN y la guerra en Internet. Entrevista a Justin Paulson (creador del sitio Web del EZLN) [EZLN and the war in Internet. Interview with Justin Paulson (creator of EZLN website)]. *Razón y palabra*, 22(1–100), 281–287. <https://revistarazonypalabra.org/index.php/ryp/article/view/1156>

²⁰ Facebook™ is a trademark of Facebook Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. По решению Роскомнадзора, социальная сеть Facebook в России признана экстремистской организацией и заблокирована.

Dewalt, B. R. (1975). Changes in the cargo systems of Mesoamerica. *Anthropological Quarterly*, 48(2), 87–105. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3316613>

Díaz, F. (2007). Comunidad y comunalidad [Community and *comunalidad*]. In S. Robles & R. Cardoso (Eds.), *Floriberto Díaz. Escrito. Comunalidad, energía viva del pensamiento mixe* [Floriberto Díaz. Writings. Community, living energy of Mixe thought] (pp. 34–50). Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.

Diener, P. (1978). The Tears of St. Anthony: Ritual and revolution in Eastern Guatemala. *Latin American Perspectives*, 5(3), 92–116. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582X7800500306>

Dow, J. (1977). Religion in the organization of a Mexican peasant economy. In R. Halperin & J. Dow (Eds.), *Peasant livelihood: Studies in economic anthropology and cultural ecology* (pp. 215–226). St. Martin's Press.

Ginsburg, F. (2008). Rethinking the digital age. In P. Wilson & M. Stewart (Eds.), *Global Indigenous media: Cultures, poetics, and politics* (pp. 287–305). Duke University Press.

Greenberg, J. (1981). *Santiago's sword: Chatino peasant religion and economics*. University of California Press.

Harris, M. (1964). *Patterns of race in the Americas*. Walker and Company.

Jones, D. (1970). Toward a native anthropology. In J. B. Cole (Ed.), *Anthropology for the nineties: Introductory readings* (pp. 30–41). Free Press.

Jones, G. (1981). Symbolic dramas of ethnic stratification: The Yucatecan fiesta system on a colonial frontier. *Papers in Anthropology*, 22(1), 131–155.

Kummels, I. (2018). *Espacios mediáticos transfronterizos. El video ayuuik entre México y Estados Unidos* [Transborder media spaces. Ayuuk videomaking between Mexico and the US]. Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social.

Landzelius, K. (2006). Introduction: Native on the net. In K. Landzelius (Ed.), *Native on the net. Indigenous and diasporic peoples in the virtual age* (pp. 1–42). Routledge.

Lee, H. (2006). Debating language and identity online: Tongans on the net. In K. Landzelius (Ed.), *Native on the net. Indigenous and diasporic peoples in the virtual age* (pp. 152–168). Routledge.

Narayan, K. (1993). How native is a “native” anthropologist? *American Anthropologist*, 95(3), 671–682. <https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1993.95.3.02a00070>

Nash, M. (1958). Political relations in Guatemala. *Social and Economic Studies*, 7(1), 65–75.

Nava Morales, E. (2019). “Para que las lenguas indígenas también puedan tener presencia”: Indigenizando el ciberespacio [“So that indigenous languages can also have a presence”: Indigenizing cyberspace]. *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies / Revue canadienne des études latino-américaines et caraïbes*, 45(1), 122–142. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08263663.2019.1662670>

Nava Morales, E., & Calderón, F. (2014). *La otra antropología: Reflexiones sobre el oficio antropológico* [The other anthropology: Reflections on the anthropological profession]. Abya Yala.

Orobitg, G. (2020). *Medios indígenas. Teorías y experiencias de la comunicación indígena en América Latina* [Indigenous media. Theories and experiences of Indigenous communication in Latin America]. Iberoamericana/Vervuert.

Parffa, P. (2001, June). *SameNet: Sámpi online. The Saami intranet and meeting point* [Paper presentation]. The International Workshop on Indigenous and Diasporic Internet Use, University of Gothenburg, Sweden.

Pietikäinen, S. (2008). "To breathe two airs": Empowering Indigenous Sámi media. In P. Wilson & M. Stewart (Eds.), *Global Indigenous media: Cultures, poetics, and politics* (pp. 197–213). Duke University Press.

Prins, H. (2001). Digital revolution: Indigenous peoples in Cyberia. In W. A. Haviland (Ed.), *Cultural anthropology* (pp. 306–308). Harcourt Brace College.

Reyes, M. (2024, August 13). *La cosmivision religioso de los Ayuujk kaay ... Es vigente las creencias muy remotas y muy Antigua la espiritualidad de creer* [The religious cosmovision of the Ayuujk Jaay is very remote and very ancient, the spirituality of believing] [Comment on the post "Día de ir al cerro con los comisionados de festejo, Familia Vásquez Gutiérrez les dejo este video espero les guste"]. Facebook²¹. <https://www.facebook.com/rocksiOficial/videos/376537941912665>

Rocksi. (2024, August 13). *Día de ir al cerro con los comisionados de festejo, Familia Vásquez Gutiérrez les dejo este video espero les guste...* [Day to go to the cerro with the comisionados de festejo, Vasquez Gutierrez Family. I leave you this video I hope you like it] [Video attached]. Facebook²¹. <https://www.facebook.com/rocksiOficial/videos/376537941912665>

Smith, W. (1977). *The fiesta system and economic change*. Columbia University Press.

Tax, S. (1937). The municipios of the Midwestern highlands of Guatemala. *American Anthropologist*, 39(3), 423–444. <https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1937.39.3.02a00060>

Video Producciones Peck [Peck's Video Productions]. (n.d.). *Home* [Facebook page]. Facebook²¹. <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100057187371534>

Wagley, C. (1949). *The social and religious life of a Guatemalan village*. American Anthropological Association.

Warschauer, M. (2000). Language, identity, and the Internet. In B. Kolko, L. Nakamura, & G. Rodman (Eds.), *Race in cyberspace* (pp. 151–170). Routledge.

Wilson, P., & Stewart, M. (Eds.) (2008). *Global Indigenous media: Cultures, poetics, and politics*. Duke University Press.

Winocur, R., & Sánchez, J. A. (Eds.). (2015). *Redes sociodigitales en México* [Sociodigital networks in Mexico]. Fondo de Cultura Económica / Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes.

Wolf, E. (1959). *Sons of the shaking earth*. The University of Chicago Press.

²¹ Facebook™ is a trademark of Facebook Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. По решению Роскомнадзора, социальная сеть Facebook в России признана экстремистской организацией и заблокирована.



ARTICLE IN THE SPECIAL SECTION

Navigating Digital Borders: Seto Community in the Virtual Territory of the VK Social Network

Ksenya A. Maretina

Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera) of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Saint Petersburg, Russia

ABSTRACT

The paper examines the digital geography of the virtual Seto community in the VK social network (also known as VKontakte), focusing on how dispersed Seto people in Russia and Estonia use digital spaces to communicate, as well as express, preserve, and promote their cultural identity. By applying a multi-sited ethnographic methodology, the research involves both online explorations and offline semi-structured interviews, with fieldwork conducted in the Pechory District. Using the network and territory approaches to digital ethnography, the study highlights how the VK serves as a digital territory where Setos, divided by distances and physical borders, connect, share cultural practices, and foster a sense of community. Special attention is given to the Seto traditions of *leelo* polyphonic singing and festive costumes, both of which serve as vital markers of ethnic identity in this digital landscape. Through content analysis of Seto personal profiles and public pages, the research reveals how social networks help maintain connections and how digital geographies are constantly shaped and reshaped by cultural exchanges. This study underscores the adaptability of online spaces in sustaining fragmented ethnic communities across physical distances.

KEYWORDS

digital ethnography, Seto community, virtual community, VK, VKontakte, social network, cyberspace, Indigenous peoples of Russia

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author is grateful to the assistance of the Museum Reserve Izborsk, Manor Museum of the Seto people in the village of Sigovo, Pechory Museum of History, and the “Flax Province” Museum. The author is also highly appreciative of the valuable consultations and recommendations provided by Elena Variksoo, Tatiana Ogareva, Mare Piho, Malle Bogacheva, and Vera Fest.

FUNDING

This work was supported by the Russian Science Foundation under Grant 23-78-10079, <https://rscf.ru/project/23-78-10079/>

Introduction

In 2005, a book called *Narod Setu: Mezhdru Rossiei i Estoniei* [Setu People: Between Russia and Estonia] was released (Alekseev & Manakov, 2005). The growing reader interest led to an additional print run of the book, and continued until the book was posted on the Internet, where it caused a wide resonance and mass discussion. According to Andrei Manakov, a researcher of Setos and one of the authors of the book, its publication along with widespread discussion and reposting prompted the recognition of Setos as an independent people (Manakov, 2018, p. 141). Thus, the Internet implicitly played a significant role in the spread of public interest towards Setos (Manakov, 2018, p. 140).

The historical territory of the Seto people, Setomaa, is situated in the borderlands of Russia and Estonia. The traditional center of the territory is the town of Pechory. Nowadays, small-numbered Seto people historically reside in three territories, namely, Pechory District of the Pskov Oblast, in the village of Haidak of the Krasnoyarsk Krai in Siberia (hereafter referred to as Siberian Setos), and in Estonia. According to the research group from Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera) of the Russian Academy of Sciences, dispersed ethnic minorities are able to compensate for the lack of real territorial proximity and communication through the Web. This way, essentially, the Internet replaces one of ethnicity's core foundations: territorial unity (Golovnev et al., 2018, p. 106).

The study aims to find out the ways the Internet connects Seto people living in three main locations, separated by a border, in one case, and a long distance, in the other.

Following Christine Hine, who points out that cyberspace should not be seen as a space divorced from any connections to “real life” and face-to-face interaction (Hine, 2000, p. 64), the current study included work in both cyberspace and the physical field.

The data concerning online representation and communication of the Setos was studied. The research focused on VK social network (also known as VKontakte),¹ the

¹ VK (short for its original name VKontakte) is a Russian online social media and social networking service. <https://vk.com> VK™ is a trademark of VK.com Ltd.

most popular social networking service in Russia, which is used extensively by the Seto respondents. In the framework of the online research, eight profile pages were analyzed. Four of these pages belong to the Setos living in the Pechory District, two belong to the Setos living in Krasnoyarsk Krai and two belong to the Setos living in Estonia. All of them are actively involved to varying degrees in Seto cultural practices, including museum work, performances and organization of folk concerts, master classes, etc. These people can all be seen as activists of Seto culture, albeit to different degrees.

In terms of the offline part of the research, two expeditions to Pechory District (in May and August 2024) were undertaken to conduct interviews with representatives of the Seto people and to visit museums themed on the Seto culture. Five semi-structured interviews were conducted, three of which were with local Seto representatives, one was with the head of a museum in Pechory that has Seto collections and collaborates with a Seto vocal ensemble, and one more was with the creator of a private Seto museum who has lived in a Seto village for many years.

This research follows the multi-sited ethnography methodology developed by George Marcus (1995). It includes explorations both in the offline and online spaces. Instead of focusing on a single, bounded field site as in traditional ethnography, multi-sited ethnography emphasizes the interconnectedness of multiple sites. In the current research, both of the ethnographic fields, virtual and physical, got interconnected from the beginning. Online explorations in the VK provided much information about self-representations, virtual ties, and cultural activities of Setos, while face-to-face meetings and semi-structured interviews with Seto representatives helped to contextualize these practices. The paper contributes to digital ethnography by exploring how the Seto people use the VK to maintain cultural connections across geographical and national borders.

Network Approach and Territory Approach to the Internet

In Web-related studies, there are two major approaches to the Internet, the network approach and the territory approach, that are often viewed as opposing each other. In digital ethnography, the network approach focuses on understanding the relationships and interactions among individuals, groups, and entities within digital spaces. This approach emphasizes how social connections, online communities, and communication patterns shape cultural practices and identities. Researchers examine how these networks function, how information flows, and how cultural meanings are constructed through interactions across various digital platforms. For instance, Christine Hine (2000) argues that the object of digital ethnography “is a topic and not a location” (p. 67). From her point of view, research should focus on flow and connections rather than location and boundaries as an organizing principle (Hine, 2000, p. 64). Hine argues that “by focusing on sites, locales and places, we may be missing out on other ways of understanding culture, based on connection, difference, heterogeneity and incoherence” (Hine, 2000, p. 61).

The territory approach considers the specific contexts and environments where digital interactions take place. This approach recognizes that digital spaces are often

ties to physical locations, cultural contexts, and historical backgrounds. Researchers explore how online behaviors and practices are influenced by the sociopolitical and cultural territories in which users operate, paying attention to the implications of place, space, and locality on digital experiences. Also, they study digital territories that are formed in cyberspace itself, which “exhibit all three characteristics of territory: they depend on a delineation of inside and outside, their boundaries are communicated, and there are attempts at control” (Lambach, 2019, p. 488). However, unlike traditional notions of “territorial state” or “territorial jurisdiction”, territories in cyberspace are non-exclusive, overlapping, and intersecting constructs. Their forms and characteristics are constantly undergoing revision (Lambach, 2019, p. 488).

Hine, while overall criticizing location-based research, points out that “one of the key dimensions of spatiality on the WWW is that of territory” (Hine, 2000, p. 105). The web developers she interviewed saw their sites as their own territory, and as territories, they had size, boundaries, and constraints (Hine, 2000, pp. 105–106). According to Lambach, though network and territory approaches can be in tension, they can also be compatible, even mutually constitutive. Therefore, the researcher advises against assigning ontological priority to either (Lambach, 2019, p. 483).

Both approaches, with their merits and specifics, are applied in this study. The network approach is used to identify connections between online actors and analyze flows of information, while territory approach is used to define correspondences between locations and virtual cultures, as well as describe digital geographies of the cyberterritories.

The progressive fragmentation and territorialization of the Internet are increasingly recognized as a significant area of academic inquiry. As Daniel Lambach points out in his research, “there is an undisputable sense of *fin de siècle* about the Internet, as if it were about to break apart into loosely coupled subnetworks, ending the era of the ‘open web’” (Lambach, 2019, p. 482). However, Lambach does not consider territory and borders as static and immutable structures and argues that they should be viewed as fluid, adaptable practices (Lambach, 2019, p. 483).

Lambach considers cyberspace as a dynamic and evolving domain, which encompasses a “social space” (Lambach, 2019, p. 484), that is a space that emerges from social interactions based on relations of social distance and proximity among Internet users (Bourdieu, 1989). Given the complexity of cyberspace, Lambach suggests to speak of “cyberspace” as an umbrella term covering a set of cyberterritories that are in a variety of ways connected to the “real world” (Lambach, 2019, p. 494).

VK Social Networking Service as a Digital Territory

The VK functions as a distinct digital territory, with defined structures, boundaries, and connections linking virtual communities to the physical world. The VK’s vast digital landscape comprises smaller cyberspaces, such as individualized digital islands of personalized profile pages and public territories of group pages representing communities and organizations. In this research, VK profile pages are treated as private territories, and all personal information is anonymized.

The Setos are divided both virtually and physically. Russian Seto, like most Russians, actively use the social network VK, while Estonian Seto mainly use Facebook². This information is also confirmed by the materials of specially conducted semi-structured interviews. However, the boundaries in cyberspace tend to be more or less permeable (Lambach, 2019, p. 499). Users show considerable autonomy and ingenuity in adapting their private territories to changing circumstances; their territories are not static but dynamic, even mobile (Lambach, 2019, p. 494). There are Estonians and Estonian Seto on VK, just as there are Russians and Russian Seto on Facebook.

According to a young Seto respondent from Pechory District, she has a Facebook account, though she does not use Facebook much:

With some [of the Setos] we communicate through Facebook. But I have never liked Facebook, so I visit it once a month, I read all the messages that are there, I ask questions once a month, respectively, then I check answers to them. (Participant 1; Trans. by Ksenya Maretina—K. M.)

Otherwise, she is mostly active in the VK, and now uses Telegram³ for communication too.

The VK is used not only for connection and communication, but also for finding and following information. Other respondent from Pechory District, when asked how she connects with Siberian Setos, remarked that she visits profile pages of her Siberian Seto friends to see the news of the Seto life and activities in Siberia.

The profile pages of Russian Setos can be seen as private digital islands that serve as individualized spaces where they express their identity through personal details, posts, images, videos, soundtracks, etc. As danah boyd points out, though profiles are not unique to social network sites, they are central to them (boyd, 2011, p. 43). All the profile pages have typical structure, or digital geography, but they can be personalized through privacy settings and the varied content.

Profile Picture

Malcolm Parks argues that among all online settings the profile photograph represents one of the most basic forms of personal expression (Parks, 2011, p. 113). Indeed, the profile picture creates the first impression of the profile and therefore of the user. The profile pictures of Setos actively engaged in cultural practices most often depict them in traditional Seto festive costumes, symbolizing their ethnic and cultural identity.

Wall Posts

Access to the personal spaces of the profiles is controlled through privacy settings. As boyd points out, “profiles both represent the individual and serve as the locus of

² Facebook™ is a trademark of Facebook Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. По решению Роскомнадзора, социальная сеть Facebook в России признана экстремистской организацией и заблокирована.

³ Telegram™ is a trademark of Telegram Group Inc., its operational center is based in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates.

interaction. Because of the inherent social—and often public or semi-public—nature of profiles, participants actively and consciously craft their profiles to be seen by others” (boyd, 2011, p. 43). Due to the highly segmented nature of the VK cyberfield, gaining access for a digital ethnographer is not always possible. Therefore, only accounts opened in accordance with the privacy settings of their owners were selected for analysis.

The content analysis of textual, photographic, and video materials was carried out on the basis of analyzing the content of eight personal pages of the Seto in VK. The key elements of material and non-material Seto culture were identified.

Most of the posts analyzed turned to be visual. The visual content is diverse, including photos, event posters, screenshots, and videos. The posts may or may not include text. The Seto-related posts may feature information about festivals, words of gratitude and congratulations to relatives, fellow Seto representatives, participants, organizers. Some of the people and organizations mentioned are presented with links to their corresponding VK pages. Some users add hashtags at the end of their posts.

Some of the researchers point out that “new technologies blur the boundaries between interpersonal and mass communication events and/or the roles that communicators take on using new systems” (Walther et al., 2011, p. 17). According to O’Sullivan (2005), wall posts can be viewed as “masspersonal communications.” In a social network, a large portion of participants act as lurkers, that is users, who read the posts but do not take active part in communication. Their behavior resembles that of passive viewers or audience members than that of active participants in a community (Parks, 2011, p. 119). This is consistent with the perspective that social networks function as a form of theatre (Mathias, 2007), where only some users are really active, while most people observe more and participate less.

The users, whose pages were analyzed for the current research, have from several dozens up to fifteen hundred friends in their accounts. It is clear that the wall posts (and reposts) featuring photos, videos, screenshots, posters, texts about the upcoming or occurred Seto-related events (e.g., festivals, concerts, exhibitions) or dedicated to the elements of the Seto culture (e.g., posts about traditional Seto crafts and folklore), serve as information sources for the people that are part of their friend list. At the same time, these posts can act as sources of interaction and communication, as some of the users react to these posts by liking, reposting, commenting, or starting private messaging with the user, etc. For instance, there was a post on the profile page of a Siberian Seto, reading:

The costume of a Seto woman necessarily includes wide satin ribbons with a pattern. The more ribbons, the richer she is. We make them all ourselves now. Before, they were gifted to us. Now we gift them ourselves. Thankfully, we have the necessary ribbons, enough different stamps and paint. Ribbons really decorate an outfit. (Participant 2; Trans. by K. M.)

The post was followed by three comments. One user posted a happy sticker as a comment, another expressed their desire to have a ribbon like this (complimented

by an emoji), and the third asked about the patterns that should be there on the ribbon and its length. To their question, they received a detailed reply featuring ribbon specifics, followed by an invitation for all who are interested to come to the library to choose a pattern and color for the ribbon. The post was supplemented by the photo of the Seto ribbons.

Among all the photos that can be found on the profile pages of the Setos, most iconic and widespread are the photos of the Setos in their traditional festive costumes. Seven of the eight profile pages that were studied for the current research belong to the women. And it is the female Seto costume that is most featured among the photos on their walls. It can be a photo of the profile page owner alone, among fellow Setos, and photos from various Seto events.

Seto women's festive costume is unique and easily recognizable. As Alexei Novozhilov notes, while the Seto women's everyday clothing did not differ from Russian, it is in the women's festive costume where the most striking differences are found (Novozhilov, 2009, pp. 105–106).

On the walls, many photos of the Seto vocal ensembles wearing traditional festive costumes can be found. It can be argued that these photos demonstrate not only the Seto costume as an element of the Seto material culture. These photos also imply the Seto singing tradition, which is a very old and important element of the Seto intangible culture. This hypothesis is supported by the comments below the photos of the Seto vocal ensembles. In the comments, users express their fascination and admiration about the performance or congratulate and praise the performers for preserving the Seto culture and traditions. It is argued that in these cases under the culture and traditions, first and foremost the *leelo* singing tradition is implied, complemented by wearing of the traditional Seto costumes as material markers of the Seto culture. The songs are performed in the Seto language, which is always an important marker of identity, though it is little used now. That's why singing tradition becomes even more precious, as it requires the use of the Seto language.

Rachel Winter and Anna Lavis (2020) propose “active listening” and “adaptive listening” to explore the polyphonic and heterogeneous nature of social media, arguing that listening is key to representing online spaces in all their cultural diversity and emotional complexity. The practice of listening affirms the importance of holistic data collection, whereby the social media message is not taken out of its surrounding context. The mode of ethnographic interaction, which the authors call “active listening,” is conceptualized as an engagement with the context of an online expression. Active listening is thus seen as a way of making sense of the polyphony of voices. One of the ways in which active listening takes context into account is by tracking the comments underneath a publication that reinforce or disrupt its semantic structure (Winter & Lavis, 2020).

In the case above, the comments following the photo of the Seto vocal ensemble are analyzed together with the photo, to bring out all the contexts of this visual online expression. Comments represent an important part of the interaction in the space of the social network sites that cannot be overlooked. They reflect connections with

other users and more personally directed, but still public, communication between them (Parks, 2011, p. 114).

It was found out that these photos are perceived first and foremost as representative of the oral tradition of the *leelo* singing, which is itself seen as a precious part of the Seto intangible culture that requires maintaining and preservation. It is argued that the Seto festive costumes, a key symbol of Seto identity, serve as material markers of intangible cultural traditions in these photos.

According to UNESCO, for the Seto community, both living in Russia and Estonia, the tradition of *leelo* remains “a cornerstone of contemporary identity” (UNESCO, 2009). In 2009, UNESCO inscribed *leelo* on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Apart from the multitude of photos, many videos representing elements of the material and intangible culture of Setos can be found in the VK, both in the profile pages of the Seto users and in the public pages, especially of the museums of the Pskov Oblast that have Seto collections. Most of the videos show a group of Setos performing *leelo* songs. It can be assumed that the polyphonic nature of this singing tradition is one of the reasons which makes it a fundamental pillar of the Seto identity, as it always requires a group of Setos to perform a song. Thus, it automatically fosters a sense of community and helps develop interpersonal connections between the Setos.

Videos can serve not only as a means of transmitting cultural elements, but also as a means of communication between dispersed Seto communities. One post from 2021 on the page of a Siberian Seto is dedicated to the video greeting from the king of the Estonian part of Setomaa Rein Järvelill to Siberian Setos, on occasion of the 120th anniversary of the village of Haidak. The post features the translation into Russian of the text of the greeting and remarks of the profile owner. The text is followed by four videos of the Estonian Setos, featuring congratulations from the Seto king, and three videos of the singing Estonian Setos. In the end of the post there is a link to YouTube⁴ where the video greeting is uploaded.

The account owner remarks: “I just want to add one thing—let’s cherish and love our Small Motherland! We have stood for so many years and will still stand” (Trans. by K. M.).

The text of the greeting follows:

Dear Seto! Brothers and sisters in Siberia, in Haidak! I am very sorry that I could not come to you. But 120 years ago, your great-grandfathers reached those places. They were very strong and brave men and women who travelled to such a far distance, to unknown lands, to build their home there. And, as it turned out, very successfully! I would like to remind you that in 2022 the decade of Indigenous languages will begin. I want you in Siberia to preserve your native language. I know that many of you there still know your native Seto language well! Pass the skill on to your children and grandchildren. Now, on Janov Day, I want to wish you all good things, good health and a beautiful holiday! We are experiencing a heat

⁴ YouTube™ is a trademark of Google Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries.

wave of 32–35 degrees Celsius, which is unusual and hard for us. We don't wish you that. We wish you love and health! A big hello to everyone from Setomaa!!!! (Participant 3; Trans. by K. M.)

It can be concluded that videos play an important role in the online interactions of Setos. First, they can demonstrate important elements of the material and intangible culture of Setos, that is the traditional costumes and polyphonic *leelo* singing, as well as the Seto language. Then, as in the case above, videos can be used to transmit greetings and congratulations from one distanced Seto community to another. This way, they serve as a means of communication.

Another historically essential element of the Seto culture and identity is the Orthodox Christianity that is traditionally followed by the Setos in contrast with other Finno-Ugric peoples. Among eight analyzed profile pages, in three of them more or less regular mentions of Orthodox festivals and rituals, as well as photos of the religious symbols and celebrations were found. Their owners, who live in Pechory District, Krasnoyarsk Krai, and Estonia, belong to the older generation.

Hashtags

At the end of the posts some of the users employ a variety of hashtags. Nowadays, the hashtag is not only a means of disseminating information on social media, but also a way of broadcasting identity (Belorussova et al., 2020, p. 35).

Seto-related hashtags can be in Russian and in Seto language, often used simultaneously in both languages. The Seto language is close to the Estonian language. It is noteworthy that the Seto language does not have a script of its own. Therefore, for the Seto language the Latin script is used, though it cannot convey the pronunciation correctly. According to a Seto respondent, “We wish to have a script that would correspond to our oral language if the scholars would develop [it]. But as of now, we have to make use of the Latin script” (Participant 4; Trans. by K. M.).

Thematically, the Seto hashtags can be divided into those concerning Seto identity directly (e.g., #seto #setomaa #сето #сетомая), featuring names of the Seto vocal ensembles (e.g., #Tsirgukõsõ #Птенцы), indicating locations where Seto cultural activities are performed (e.g., #сигово #печоры #печорская_лингвистическая_гимназия #плг #petseri_lingvistiline_gümnaasium) and the names of Seto-related events (e.g., #неделя_культуры_сето). These four types encompass almost all Seto-related hashtags in the VK. Hashtags are only used by some of the Seto users. They are also utilized by the museum pages, especially, by the page of the Museum Reserve Izborsk. For the reactions to the posts from other users, most wall posts have many likes, fewer reposts, and much fewer comments.

Reposts

Many reposts concern upcoming events such as exhibitions and festivals. Reposts are made from museums that have Seto collections or arrange Seto-related exhibitions; festival organizers; newspapers and government organizations featuring Seto-related material; reposts from other persons, etc.

VK Social Networking Service as a Network

In the framework of the network approach, the VK can be visualized as a network, in which the nodes represent profile pages and public pages, and edges represent links between these pages.

By nature, networks are decentralized constructs that are characterized by self-organization, emergence, and distributed activity. Social networks among Internet users are based on voluntary associations across horizontal linkages. In the network analyses, the focus is on the centrality and connectivity of nodes, on externalities within the network, on relations and flows between nodes (Lambach, 2019, pp. 484–485).

Networks can be considered as online communities, either close or loose, depending on the specifics of the flows and connections between the virtual actors that constitute the community. The other way round, online communities can be viewed in terms of networks of personal relationships (Rheingold, 2000; Wellman & Gulia, 1999). Howard Rheingold speculates that the popularity of online communities can be considered as a “response to the hunger for community that has followed the disintegration of traditional communities” (Rheingold, 1993, p. 62). According to boyd, “social network sites are publics both because of the ways in which they connect people en masse and because of the space they provide for interactions and information” (boyd, 2011, p. 43). As is a case with “community”, “public” is a term with multiple meanings (boyd, 2011, p. 40), that can be considered as a group of people who share “a common understanding of the world, a shared identity, a claim to inclusiveness, a consensus regarding the collective interest” (Livingstone, 2005, p. 9), or it can be considered as an “imagined community” (Anderson, 2006).

By organizing and maintaining virtual communities people preserve and even develop connections despite living far away, or having moved to another village, city, or country. According to a Seto respondent, who heads a Seto vocal school ensemble,

After graduating some of the children go to other cities to study in university. They live in many places now, Pskov, Krasnoyarsk, and many others. We stay in touch, and to all the new places they bring the Seto culture with them too and in a way they become its ambassadors. (Participant 5; Trans. by K. M.)

Nowadays scholars have moved away from conceptualizing community as a geographic entity to conceptualizing it in psychological terms or as quality of sociality (Amit, 2002). In this sense, community is viewed as a culture, a set of ideas and interpersonal sentiments rather than as a physical place (Anderson, 1991; Bender, 1978; Calhoun, 1980).

An essential test of the authenticity of any community, including virtual communities, is the ability to engage in collective action (Jones, 1995). The group thinks of itself as a community and the members identify with the community (Bell & Newby, 1974; Willson, 2006). Communities are also created through the ritualized sharing of information (Carey, 1989; Jones, 1995). To be sustained, a community must engage in such information-sharing rituals on a regular basis (Parks, 2011, p. 108).

Public Pages

Representatives of many peoples of Russia create public pages in the VK as groups where they could connect, communicate, and express their ethnicity and culture. These VK groups are considered and studied by many researchers as virtual communities (Belorussova, 2022, 2024; Mamontova, 2014; Pishleger, 2022; Tkachuk, 2021). However, in the VK there are currently no such active public page that would act as a Seto online community.

Instead, there is a multitude of public pages that periodically or occasionally post information about the Setos. Among them are government museum pages, such as public pages of the Museum Reserve Izborsk, Museum of the history of the town Pechory, Pskov Museum Reserve, that post regularly the Seto-related content, including information about material and intangible culture of Setos, posters of the upcoming exhibitions, etc.

Most active in this regard and most popular among the Setos is the Museum Reserve Izborsk⁵ public page. Its popularity among Setos can be (at least, among Setos which profile pages were selected for the current research) traced by regular reposts from the museum public page to their pages. The one and only official museum of the Setos in Russia, Manor Museum of the Seto people in the village of Sigovo, is a part of the Museum Reserve Izborsk. Much of the content posted by the Museum Reserve Izborsk concerns the Seto material culture, their festivals and traditions. It is at the field next to the Manor Museum of the Seto people in the village of Sigovo where the most well-known Seto festival “Setomaa. Family meetings” is celebrated every year. The holiday is traditionally held on the 28th of August, the feast day of the Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God. The festival is popular with tourists and is extensively covered on the museum VK page wall, including photos, videos, and sometimes live streams of the festival.

Also, there is a number of other VK public pages, such as governmental cultural centres, local libraries and newspapers that post information about the upcoming or occurred Seto events (for instance, folk concerts, master classes, or festivals) and are reposted by the Setos on their profile pages. These informational posts tie digital spaces to physical locations by indicating a specific address where this cultural event will take (or have taken) place.

Seto VK Network as a Virtual Community

It is argued that by the links, subscriptions and reposts, comments and likes, the abovementioned Seto private pages and public pages with Seto-related material are interconnected into a diffuse virtual network.

Researchers who study online communities have suggested that distributed network structures can take the place of public commons (e.g., Sohn, 2008). That is, interlinked private networks, such as those found on social network sites, may take the place of a public forum. Indeed, rates of participation may actually be higher in these

⁵ <https://mdolina.ru/en>

more diffuse networks than in the shared public areas of online communities. For instance, in the VK there is a public page Setomaa that, according to the description, “is dedicated to the culture of the Indigenous population of Setomaa” (Trans. by K. M.). Currently, there are more than 600 subscribers in the group. Seemingly, it is a group representing a Seto community online. However, there were only six posts since 2020 and the public page has been inactive since then.

Meanwhile, constant activity can be observed in the diffuse network represented by the Seto private pages and public pages that share related material. A special space in this network is certainly occupied, again, by the page of the Museum Reserve Izbork, as it is most consistently and often reposted by the Setos. It is noteworthy, that in the village of Haidak in Siberia there is a private Seto museum, that is “under tutelage” of the local rural library, but it does not have a VK page and information about it on the Internet is sparse. However, mentions of the museum and its activities can be traced on the profile pages of the Setos living in the village of Haidak. For example, one such post on the profile page a local Seto informs:

February, 21st is the International Day of the Tour Guide. Since the library in the village of Haidak is the caregiver of the Museum of Siberian Setos, the duty of a tour guide is also our concern. And not only that. For tourists we will hold a master class on making hay by hand (as in the old days and in the Soviet years in the village). We will also teach them the Seto dances. We will sing national songs for our guests. So, a tour guide should be able to do a lot of things (Participant 6; Trans. by K. M.).

A series of posts with photos by the same Seto, dated August and September of 2023, recounts the journey of a group of the Siberian Setos to Setomaa, to meet the Setos of the Pechory District and participate in the annual festival. On the pages of the Pechory Setos the posts featuring the visit of the Siberian Setos to Pechory, as well as details of a similar journey to Haidak of the Pechory Setos, can be found. Undoubtedly, these real-life visits are important, though rare, occasions for the Russian Seto community. Otherwise, they maintain connection through the web, including by the means of the VK network. The interactions between Setos can be followed through their reposts from each other's pages, comments under each other's posts, and links to each other's profiles, embedded in the posts.

A Pechory Seto respondent confirms that despite being separated from other Seto communities by distance and by border, they stay in touch by the means of the Internet:

We are moving in any case, we try to stay connected with each other, communicate with each other, in order to simply understand where we are going. It is still very important to synchronize ... Well, social networks are still out there, aren't they? (Participant 7; Trans. by K. M.)

Pechory Setos interact with Setos living in Siberia and in Estonia, share news, practice Seto language, congratulate each other on important occasions, and together do research about their culture. For example, recently my Seto respondent after a folk performance with her group

received a small complaint, quite fair, about why don't you have Easter songs. Here I thought about it, because I had never heard any Seto Easter songs in my life. I mean, I texted everyone right away, I was like, so, guys, do we have any sorts of Easter songs? Half the people said it's the first time they heard about it in the first place, and the other half said that there's something there, we have to look. (Participant 5; Trans. by K. M.)

This way they communicate on different topics, related to the Seto culture. Meanwhile, the Setos living in one place mostly communicate face-to-face, many people of the older generation do not use social networks at all. As a Seto respondent shares,

there are quite few of us, that is, even if we are talking about the Siberian Seto, we mostly communicate in person, and we have a lot of older people. The elderly Seto, of course, do not surf social networks. (Participant 8; Trans. by K. M.)

To get in touch, they call each other by phone or meet in person. Although only few people among the Seto community are actively involved into the popularization of their culture. For them, personal connections between each other are of great importance.

Definitions of community typically specify that members exhibit attachments to one another and to their community more generally (Kanter, 1972; Willson, 2006). Communities are in their essence defined as shared, close, and intimate (Jensen, 1990, p. 71). These emotional bonds need not be experienced toward every member of the community, though it is generally assumed that the majority of members have personal attachments to at least some other members (Parks, 2011, p. 109).

danah boyd considers social network sites as a type of networked publics, that the researcher sees simultaneously as the space constructed through networked technologies and an imagined collective that emerges as a result of the intersection of people, technology, and practice. Networked publics help people to connect and allow them to gather for social, cultural, and other purposes (boyd, 2011).

Technology structures introduce new possibilities for interaction and distinct affordances that shape how people engage with these environments, allowing them to share visual material, post information, comment on each other's posts, and repost each other, etc. Basically, it is the architecture, or digital geography, of networked publics that differentiates them from the more traditional notions of publics. As a consequence, new dynamics emerge that shape participation and interaction of people with information and each other.

Conclusion

In the current research, methodologically the approach of multi-sited ethnography was followed. In its framework, the cyberspace of the VK social network was explored, and two expeditions were organized into the physical field. Territory and network approach to the Internet were both successively used. As the current study has proven, together, these approaches provide a comprehensive understanding of how digital culture is produced and experienced, considering both the social networks that connect individuals and the territorial contexts that shape their interactions. Territoriality is communicated also through the public pages of the museum pages, local government organizations, folk festival organizers, etc. They spread information about Seto-related events in the VK that helps to maintain the expression and promotion of the Seto culture.

Connectedness of Setos living in Pechory District, Krasnoyarsk Krai, and Estonia can be traced through the VK social network. The VK emerges as an important platform for Seto individuals to express their cultural identity, primarily through the sharing of visual content, such as photos and videos of traditional costumes, festivals, and the polyphonic *leelo* singing. These posts not only act as markers of Seto ethnicity but also serve as a means of reinforcing the sense of community among Setos spread across different regions. The network of connections formed by personal profile pages and institutional public pages, such as those of museums and cultural organizations, fosters a virtual community that transcends physical borders and distances.

Despite the lack of a unified public page solely dedicated to the Seto community, the interlinked personal pages and public reposts create a diffuse yet effective network that supports cultural exchange and personal interaction. This research highlights the importance of digital spaces like VK in enabling ethnic minorities to retain a collective identity in the absence of geographic proximity.

The analysis also suggests that while traditional offline practices such as Orthodox Christianity play a significant role in Seto culture, they are less prominently represented in the digital sphere, potentially due to generational shifts, Soviet heritage, and subduedness of the religious topic in the VK digital space. There is no doubt that this important topic deserves further attention and study by the researchers. Meanwhile, the traditional Seto festive costume and polyphonic *leelo* singing stand out as some of the key elements of Seto culture and historical heritage both in online and offline spaces, transmitted both through photos and videos.

Nowadays, the cultural practices of the Setos are closely interconnected with the processes of the museification of the Seto culture and the festival activities. Overall, the research confirms the assertion by Alexei Novozhilov that “traditional Seto culture is increasingly preserved in the Pskov–Pechory region as a folklore and museum phenomenon” (Novozhilov, 2009, p. 108).

Ultimately, this study affirms that the Seto virtual community on VK functions as an important cultural hub, where identity, tradition, and social bonds are actively maintained and adapted to the digital age. The Seto people's ability to leverage social media for cultural preservation showcases the evolving nature of ethnic identity in the digital era, where physical distance is mitigated by the creation of fluid, adaptable cyberterritories.

References

- Alekseev, Iu. V., & Manakov, A. (2005). *Narod setu: Mezhdru Rossiei i Estoniei* [Setu people: Between Russia and Estonia]. Evropa.
- Amit, V. (2002). Reconceptualizing community. In V. Amit (Ed.), *Realizing community: Concepts, social relationships and sentiments* (pp. 1–20). Routledge.
- Anderson, B. (1991). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (2nd ed.). Verso.
- Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (3rd ed.). Verso.
- Bell, C., & Newby, H. (Eds.). (1974). *The sociology of community: A selection of readings*. Frank Cass & Company.
- Belorussova, S. Yu. (2022). Korennye malochislennye narody Rossii: Virtual'naia etnichnost' i setevye opyty [Indigenous small-numbered peoples of Russia: Virtual ethnicity and network experiences]. *Etnografia*, 4, 84–111. [https://doi.org/10.31250/2618-8600-2022-4\(18\)-84-111](https://doi.org/10.31250/2618-8600-2022-4(18)-84-111)
- Belorussova, S. Yu. (2024). Besermianskaia identichnost': Mezhdru real'nost'iu i virtual'nost'iu [Beserman identity between reality and virtuality]. *Yearbook of Finno-Ugric Studies*, 18(3), 380–392. <https://doi.org/10.35634/2224-9443-2024-18-3-380-392>
- Belorussova, S. Yu., Danilova, E. N., & Sysoeva, M. E. (2020). Kheshtegi i etnichnost' [Hashtags and ethnicity]. *Etnografia*, 3, 33–61. [https://doi.org/10.31250/2618-8600-2020-3\(9\)-33-61](https://doi.org/10.31250/2618-8600-2020-3(9)-33-61)
- Bender, T. (1978). *Community and social change in America*. Rutgers University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1989). Social space and symbolic power. *Sociological Theory*, 7(1), 14–25. <https://doi.org/10.2307/202060>
- boyd, d. (2011). Social network sites as networked publics: Affordances, dynamics, and implications. In Z. Papacharissi (Ed.), *A networked self: Identity, community, and culture on social network sites* (pp. 39–58). Routledge.
- Calhoun, C. J. (1980). Community: Toward a variable conceptualization for comparative research. *Social History*, 5(1), 105–129. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03071028008567472>
- Carey, J. (1989). *Communication as culture: Essays on media and society*. Unwin Hyman.
- Golovnev, A. V., Belorussova, S. Yu., & Kisser, T. S. (2018). Veb-etnografiia i kiberetnichnost' [Web-ethnography and cyberethnicity]. *Ural Historical Journal*, 1, 100–108. [https://doi.org/10.30759/1728-9718-2018-1\(58\)-100-108](https://doi.org/10.30759/1728-9718-2018-1(58)-100-108)
- Hine, C. (2000). *Virtual ethnography*. SAGE. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9780857020277>

Jensen, J. (1990). *Redeeming modernity: Contradictions in media criticism*. SAGE.

Jones, S. (1995). Understanding community in the information age. In S. Jones (Ed.), *CyberSociety: Computer-mediated communication and community* (pp. 10–35). SAGE.

Kanter, R. M. (1972). *Commitment and community: Communes and utopias in sociological perspective*. Harvard University Press.

Lambach, D. (2020). The territorialization of cyberspace. *International Studies Review*, 22(3), 482–506. <https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/viz022>

Livingstone, S. (Ed.). (2005). *Audiences and publics: When cultural engagement matters for the public sphere*. Intellect.

Mamontova, N. (2014). Kochevanie na prostorakh Interneta: Reprezentatsiia evenkiiskoi kul'tury VKontakte [Nomadism in the online space: Representation of the Evenk culture on VKontakte]. *Sibirskie istoricheskie issledovaniia*, 2, 95–125.

Manakov, A. G. (2018). Chetvert' veka izucheniia malogo naroda setu (seto) pskovskimi geografami [Quarter of a century of study of the small-numbered Setu (Seto) people by Pskov geographers]. In T. V. Veresova & A. G. Manakov (Eds.), *Vos'mye Pskovskie mezhdunarodnye kraevedcheskie chteniia* [The 8th Pskov International Local History Readings] (Vol. 1, pp. 136–148). Pskov State University.

Marcus, G. E. (1995). Ethnography in/of the world system: The emergence of multi-sited ethnography. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24, 95–117. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.24.1.95>

Mathias, A. (2007, October 6). The Fakebook generation. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/06/opinion/06mathias.html>

Novozhilov, A. G. (2009). Naselenie Pskovo-Pechorskogo kraia kak etnolokal'naia gruppа [Population of the Pskov-Pechora region as an ethnolocal group]. *Vestnik Sankt-Peterburgskogo Universiteta, Istoriya*, 3, 94–110.

O'Sullivan, P. B. (2005, May). *Masspersonal communication: Rethinking the mass interpersonal divide* [Paper presentation]. The annual meeting of the International Communication Association, New York, United States.

Parks, M. R. (2011). Social network sites as virtual communities. In Z. Papacharissi (Ed.), *A networked self: Identity, community, and culture on social network sites* (pp. 105–123). Routledge.

Pishleger, K. (2022). Vybor iazyka i strategii napisaniia v besermianskikh gruppakh v VKontakte [The choice of language and writing strategy in Besermyan VK groups]. In *Elektronnaia pis'mennost' narodov Rossiiskoi Federatsii–2021 & IWCLUL 2021: materialy Mezhdunarodnoi nauch.-prakt. konf. (23–24 sentiabria 2021 g., g. Syktyvkar)* [Electronic written language of the peoples of the Russian Federation–

2021 & IWCLUL 2021: Proceedings of the International Scientific and Practical Conference, September 23–24, 2021, Syktyvkar] (pp. 116–132). Komi Republican Academy of Public Service and Administration.

Rheingold, H. (1993). *The virtual community: Homesteading on the electronic frontier*. Addison Wesley.

Rheingold, H. (2000). *The virtual community: Homesteading on the electronic frontier* (Rev. ed.). MIT Press.

Tkachuk, N. V. (2021) Internet-prostranstvo kak ploshchadka proiavleniia etnicheskoi kommunikatsii i identichnosti titul'nykh etnosov lugry [Internet space as a platform for the manifestation of ethnic communication and identity of the titular ethnic groups of Yugra]. *Social Competence*, 6(2), 250–260.

UNESCO. (2009). *Seto Leelo, Seto polyphonic singing tradition*. <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/seto-leelo-seto-polyphonic-singing-tradition-00173>

Walther, J. B., Carr, C. T., Choi, S. S. W., Deandrea, D. C., Kim, J., Tong, S. T., & van der Heide, B. (2011). Interaction of interpersonal, peer, and media influence sources online: A research agenda for technology convergence. In Z. Papacharissi (Ed.), *A networked self: Identity, community, and culture on social network sites* (pp. 17–38). Routledge.

Wellman, B., & Gulia, M. (1999). Virtual communities as communities: Net surfers don't ride alone. In M. A. Smith & P. Kollock (Eds.), *Communities in cyberspace* (pp. 167–194). Routledge.

Willson, M. A. (2006). *Technically together: Rethinking community within techno-society*. Peter Lang.

Winter, R., & Lavis, A. (2020). Looking, but not listening? Theorizing the practice and ethics of online ethnography. *Journal of Empirical Research on Human Research Ethics*, 15(1–2), 55–62. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1556264619857529>



ARTICLE IN THE SPECIAL SECTION

Abkhaz and Abazin Communities in Cyberspace

Tamara G. Ayba

Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera) of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Saint Petersburg, Russia

ABSTRACT

The article explores the strategies implemented by two related Indigenous peoples, Abkhaz and Abazins (Abaza), aimed at preserving ethnic culture in the context of cyberspace. For Abkhaz and Abazins living abroad, it is essential to demonstrate their unity with their historical homeland, their belonging and inseparability from their traditions. Therefore, they take photos and videos of celebrations of traditional holidays, post them on social networking sites, thus indicating that they are an integral part of their people, regardless of the fact that they live outside. At the same time, the Abazins who are living in Russia, also use virtual communication for the popularization and revival of traditional culture. A content analysis was performed to study ethno-characteristic, linguistic, local, extra-territorial communities in popular social networks such as VK, Odnoklassniki, Telegram, Instagram¹, Facebook². As a result, the main trends that Abkhaz and Abazins use in cyberspace to keep their Indigenous culture alive were traced. In addition, the confrontation between classical Islam and traditional beliefs, which are an integral part of the ethnic culture of these two peoples, was revealed.

KEYWORDS

Abkhaz, Apsuara, Abazins, Abaza, Türkiye, Russia, traditions, migration, identity, religion, communities, politics, culture, Indigenous peoples, ethnic groups

¹ Instagram™ is a trademark of Instagram Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. По решению Роскомнадзора, социальная сеть Instagram полностью заблокирована в России как экстремистская организация.

² Facebook™ is a trademark of Facebook Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. По решению Роскомнадзора, социальная сеть Facebook в России признана экстремистской организацией и заблокирована.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The study was realized with support of the Russian Science Foundation, Project № 23-78-10079, <https://rscf.ru/project/23-78-10079/>

Introduction

In the early 19th century, the Caucasus became a focus point for two empires, the Russian and the Ottoman. The division of political influence and the long-lasting Caucasian war resulted in the most massive forced migration of a number of Caucasian peoples, including Abkhaz and Abazins, to the territory of present-day Türkiye and the Middle East in 1864. Consequently, the number of these ethnic groups sharply decreased. The exact number of deportees remains unclear, despite existing studies on the Caucasian War and the Muhajirs, or immigrants (e.g., Ganich, 2007). Although various figures are cited, they cannot be considered reasonable, since during the forced exodus to the Ottoman Empire one passport was issued per family, and a family could consist of a different number of people. One of the options for solving the problem involves counting the passports, though the resulting figure will be approximate; moreover, the passports did not indicate ethnicity. As we know, different peoples were evicted from the territory of the North and West Caucasus. The surnames of the deportees would be one more basis for counting, which, however, also does not constitute a reliable method (Ayba, 2022a).

At present, the Abaza people are officially recognized as a minor Indigenous people of Russia (O Edinom perechne, 2000). According to the All-Russian Population Census 2020, their total number amounts to 41,874 people (Rosstat, 2022). The Karachay-Cherkess Republic in the North Caucasus is known as the region where the Abaza population is predominantly concentrated. “Within the territory of the Karachay-Cherkess Republic, the Abaza people reside in the following auls: Inzhich-Chukun, Psyzh, Kubina, Kara-Pago, Elburgan (Abazinsky District); Krasny Vostok (Malokarachayevsky District); Novo-Kuvinsk, Apsua (Adyghe-Khablsky District)” (Golovnev et al., 2022; Trans. by Tamara Ayba—T. A.). The Abazins speak the Abazi language, which belongs to the Abkhaz–Abazi subgroup of the Abkhaz–Adygian (West Caucasian) group of North Caucasian languages. The closest related language is Abkhazian. Among other related languages are Kabardino-Cherkessian and Adyghe languages (Albogachieva, 2021). “Linguistically and ethnoculturally (folklore, conversational etiquette, code of behavior, etc.), the closest related ethnic groups are the Abkhaz and the Adyghe people in Russia (Circassians, Kabardians, Adygei)” (Pis’mennye iazyki mira, 2000; Trans. by T. A.). The Abazins profess Sunni Islam, as do some Abkhaz; besides, there are adherents of traditional beliefs among Abkhaz (Krylov, 2001). Meanwhile, Abkhazia is a secular republic with Christianity as the state religion.

Similar to the Abkhaz, the majority of the Abazi population lives outside their native country. The largest Abazi diaspora lives in Türkiye. However, the number of Abazi and Abkhaz population in Türkiye cannot be estimated, as the ethnic groups are not counted in the national census. Nevertheless, Turkish census data on mother

tongue proficiency indicate the presence of 150–200 thousand speakers of Abazi (Mukov, 2021) and 400 thousand speakers of Abkhazi in the country. Meanwhile, the population of the Abkhazian people in the Republic of Abkhazia amounts to 125,726 people (Ayba, 2022b). Given the data presented, the conclusion can be drawn that forced migration to the territory of the former Ottoman Empire has put Abkhaz and Abazins, the autochthonous ethnic groups of the Caucasus, in a vulnerable position both in their historical homeland and beyond its borders.

Larger Adyghe ethnic groups abroad, such as the Kabardians, could have assimilated the Abkhaz and Abaza peoples, who constituted comparatively smaller groups. In response to these factors, the Abkhaz and Abaza communities abroad have adopted a strategy of consolidation, both online and offline. These ethnic groups are closely related, sharing highly similar customs and traditions, as well as linguistic connections through related languages with distinct dialects.

A. N. Genko (2021) observed the following regarding the linguistic kinship between two languages: the Ashkhar dialect of the Abaza language closely resembles the North Abkhazian, or Zelenchuk, dialect of the Abkhazian language (Dzhapua & Chekalov, 2019). A. N. Genko and L. I. Lavrov authored the earliest and most significant works on the ethnography of the Abaza people. During the Soviet period, L. I. Lavrov's student, L. Kunizheva, who elevated academic Abazinology to a new scientific level, further advanced the study of the Abaza population. Collaborating with members of the national elite, she contributed to groundbreaking studies on the history and ethnography of the Abaza people, which now serve as foundational texts for their scholarly exploration (e.g., Danilova, 1984; Kunizheva, 1974). However, the amount of empirical material available on the ethnography of the Abaza people remains significantly smaller than that of other Caucasian peoples (Dzhapua & Chekalov, 2019). Among the most recent noteworthy contributions to the study of the Abaza people are the works of M. S.-G. Albogachieva (2023).

Modern research frequently applies interdisciplinary methods, combining linguistics, historical anthropology, and sociology. Due to this, researchers are more actively using oral sources and field data, and therefore are able to draw conclusions based on the real practices and traditions of the Abazins. Moreover, the interaction of the Abazins with neighboring peoples causes interest among researchers, thus opening new perspectives for the analysis of adaptation and coexistence of cultures. Consequently, further study of the Abazin people in the context of the general history of the Caucasus appears to be a significant issue, contributing to the preservation of not only linguistic but also cultural heritage. Each new step in this direction helps to shed light on the uniqueness of the Abazi identity and its place in the diverse cultural landscape of the region.

The ethnic identities of Indigenous peoples are greatly impacted by globalization processes. Recognizing the benefits of hybrid communication, leaders and members of national minorities started to actively build ethnic communities across various platforms, often simultaneously.

Technological advances have made it possible to bridge geographical and cultural divides, fostering spaces for dialogue and mutual understanding. In this new

context, communities are able to share their identities, traditions, and values with a broader audience. Each post, each message becomes a piece of the mosaic reflecting the uniqueness and diversity of Indigenous peoples, which in turn contributes to their self-awareness and solidarity. Global connectivity serves as a powerful catalyst enabling these communities not only to preserve their roots but also to adapt to a rapidly changing world. This connectivity creates platforms for a future where their traditions and their cultures can exist and furthermore, thrive.

Caucasian ethnic groups, including the Abazins, largely represent conservative societies characterized by rigid social hierarchies, defined roles by age and gender, and an overarching cultural emphasis on shame. As a distinct social mechanism, shame regulates behavior within the community. The phrase “What other people will think,” commonly heard in everyday interactions, reinforces adherence to traditional norms, with public opinion exerting significant pressure on individuals in the Caucasus region.

In the cyberspace, however, anonymity through avatars and nicknames provides users with greater freedom of expression. This shift is particularly evident among men and women aged 15 to 30, where radical sentiments are increasingly prevalent. This new generation of Muslims often challenges the secrecy traditionally observed in Abazin ritual practices, expressing their opinions in an uncompromising manner. For the past two decades, tensions between traditional beliefs and Islam have been a prominent issue in the Caucasus region, with the Internet serving a convenient space for the dissemination of Islamic teachings.

As part of the research, I have compiled a register of online communities dedicated to the history, culture, and language of the Abaza. The analysis of comments in social network VK (also known as VKontakte),³ in all Abazi groups has revealed several of the most frequently used terms. The word “Abazin” appeared 2,389 times, making it the most common, while “Allah,” with 1,471 mentions, ranked fourth. In cyberspace, traditional age and gender hierarchies are often blurred; for example, younger individuals may engage in heated debates with elders—an act considered disrespectful in offline settings. This generational divide has become a significant source of societal tension, with ideological differences contributing to the formation of a new identity. As a result, the Internet has become not only a platform for discussing cultural and religious topics but also an arena for rethinking traditional values.

In their discussions of tradition and modernity, youth communities address not only issues of national identity but also the reinterpretation of Islamic principles. Influenced by global trends and enhanced access to information, young Abaza are reexamining their cultural roots through the lens of modernity. A challenge of preserving cultural heritage while embracing contemporary social norms becomes a central theme in these conversations. In addition, cyberspace facilitates the emergence of new leadership roles, where authority is no longer determined by age but by the relevance and resonance of ideas. This shift has created opportunities for activists to influence public opinion and shape a new discourse on the identity and culture of the Abazins within the context of globalization.

³ VK (short for its original name VKontakte) is a Russian online social media and social networking service. <https://vk.com> VK™ is a trademark of VK.com Ltd.

Abazin communities on Russian social networks also support the core idea of uniting the Abaza people and revival of their traditional culture. The situation of insecurity has framed their strategies to ensure the survival of the ethnic minority (Inglehart, 2018). These strategies are based on solidarity within the ethnic group, following the Apsuara (Abazara) traditional code of honor that regulates all spheres of life for Abkhaz and Abaza peoples. This study examines the strategies employed by both Abkhaz and Abaza peoples abroad, as well as the Abazin community in Russia, to protect their ethnic heritage, focusing particularly on cyberspace.

Analytical Data on the Online Communities

Since the forced migration of their peoples, the Abkhaz and Abaza cultural centers (derneks) have continuously sought ways to ensure effective communication with their fellow nationals in their historical homeland. Karim H. Karim provides an interesting perspective on this topic, suggesting that “the phenomenon of inter-continental diasporic communication has existed for centuries” (as cited in Lieberman, 2003, p. 78). Those from immigrant communities quickly embraced and adapted new communication technologies for their needs, from telegraphs and landlines to mobile phones and social networks (Golovnev et al., 2021). This point is further supported by Lieberman (2003) who argues that the Internet, with its accessibility and global reach, proves particularly beneficial for diaspora communities and their needs, fostering both adaptation to new surroundings and the reinforcement of cultural identity (Lieberman, 2003). Besides these functions, the Internet plays a crucial role as a meeting point, offering a democratic platform for discussing current issues.

Hence, the performed content analysis used the materials from the ethnic, language, local, and non-territorial online communities on social media platforms such as VK, Odnoklassniki⁴, Telegram⁵, Instagram⁶, Facebook⁷ (Belorussova & Siuziumov, 2024). The Abaza people in Russia primarily used social media platforms VK (59 groups) and Odnoklassniki (11 groups) to create online communities. An analysis of statistical data for the reporting period, based on markers such as date of creation and activity status (active/inactive, open/closed), reveals a decline in the relevance of such communities within these social networks. While exceptions exist, these communities often duplicate their content from other platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube⁸. Presently, Instagram serves as a favored platform for representation of Abaza traditional culture among Russian-speaking online users, although the social media platform is forbidden in the Russian Federation. The most commonly-used

⁴ Odnoklassniki is a Russian social network owned by VK. <https://ok.ru>

⁵ Telegram™ is a trademark of Telegram Group Inc., its operational center is based in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates.

⁶ Instagram™ is a trademark of Instagram Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. По решению Роскомнадзора, социальная сеть Instagram полностью заблокирована в России как экстремистская организация.

⁷ Facebook™ is a trademark of Facebook Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. По решению Роскомнадзора, социальная сеть Facebook в России признана экстремистской организацией и заблокирована.

⁸ YouTube™ is a trademark of Google Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries.

social media service abroad has always been Facebook⁹. All ethnic minorities from Caucasus that live overseas utilize the platform to express their identity. Telegram, a less widespread platform, can be effectively used to represent traditional culture and foster communication between diasporas across continents.

Despite their distinct interfaces, Instagram and Facebook both fulfill the common need for visual representation. Abkhaz and Abaza ethnic groups prioritize highlighting their connection to the historical homeland, belonging and integrity with their traditions through photos and video recordings of traditional holidays. They share these materials online to exhibit their involvement in the community, even while living overseas. They place importance on performing religious practices that are accepted and respected at their native land. The Abkhaz and Abaza traditional cultures are deeply rooted in spirituality, with traditional beliefs functioning as a distinguishing marker of their identity. For those Abaza that are recognized as a minor Indigenous people, photo and video recordings of reconstructed rituals offer a vital tool for reviving traditional culture, as it was nearly lost during the forced migration, including traditions such as calendar ceremonies, oral folklore tradition, and life cycle rituals.

To conduct a more focused examination of content, I selected three representative groups (active and numerous) on social media platforms:

- The Alashara group, which has a combined social media presence of approximately 31,000 subscribers (with a margin of error) across all listed platforms including YouTube;
- Istanbul Abhaz Kültür Derneği online community, with a total of 8,835 subscribers (Instagram and Facebook);
- The Abaza Inform that has 23,800 subscribers on Instagram, 2,503 on TikTok¹⁰, and 758 on its Telegram channel.

Reconstructing Intangible Ethnocultural Heritage

Alashara

Alashara is one of the principal online groups that deals with preserving traditional Abazin culture conceptually and systematically. The group was created on VK on March 3, 2013 (Op-Ano Alashara, n.d.). As of now, the number of subscribers is 3,476. Another community on VK, registered as a personal page for Op-Ano Alashara, was created in 2013 (3,500 subscribers). Currently, the page is used to publish reposts from the Alashara group.

An analysis of the geographical distribution of Alashara's subscribers reveals that its activities garner interest not only in major cities but also in less populated regions. This goes to substantiate the broad appeal and significance of the content it provides. For instance, in cities such as Pyatigorsk and Nalchik, subscribers remain active

⁹ Facebook™ is a trademark of Facebook Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. По решению Роскомнадзора, социальная сеть Facebook в России признана экстремистской организацией и заблокирована.

¹⁰ TikTok is a trademark of ByteDance, registered in China and other countries. TikTok has suspended all new posting and live-streaming for users in the Russian Federation.

despite their relatively small populations. This may stem from the engaging nature of the topics and the opportunity for relatability when it comes to empathizing with the individuals featured in its posts. Thus, the geographical distribution of Alashara's subscribers not only confirms its popularity but also highlights new possibilities for development and enhanced interaction with its audience.

In terms of the gender composition of the audience, a relatively balanced interest in content was revealed. The male audience, accounting for 52%, can be drawn to topics related to history, culture, and tradition, while the female audience, representing 48%, might find appeal in themes of social dynamics and personal growth. This balance offers a unique opportunity to craft content that resonates with a diverse audience. In addition, this group is distinguished by its high rate of publications on the page. News about the Abaza people and Alashara's work is updated multiple times throughout the day.

Alashara, like most public organizations, actively works to preserve the spiritual and cultural heritage, national identity, traditions, customs, and languages of the Abkhaz-Abaza people. Moreover, the project aims to create a unified ethnocultural space and encourage people to participate in public life. Seeking to broaden the opportunities for interaction and self-expression, Alashara established an online community on most popular social media platforms, such as VK, Instagram (Alashara. *Razvitie Abazino-Abkhazskogo etnosa*, n.d.), Telegram (Alashara, n.d.-a). The community has become an ethnocultural space on the online platform, providing relevant news and opportunities for feedback. The posts are extensively discussed and commented on, fostering an instant exchange of opinions online. Alashara is also working on the program *Razvitie Naroda Abaza* [Development for the People of Abaza], focusing on a healthy lifestyle, physical education, and sports. Posts on these topics elicit the highest number of comments. Topics related to the entertainment industry also attract significant attention, particularly with the participation of Abaza people in popular TV shows and music contests. It is seen as one of the most effective strategies for self-representation among Indigenous peoples. Therefore, the online sphere has emerged as another mean of communication within the Abaza community, adding a new dimension to their experience.

One of the Alashara's projects is *Fil'my-rekonstruktsii o traditsiakh i tsennostiakh abazinskoi sem'i* [Reconstruction Films About the Traditions and Values of the Abazi Family] (Alashara, 2022). Traditional rituals are recorded on video and posted on the Alashara online platforms in the form of short films (videos). Some of the videos posted on YouTube have their comments section disabled (Alashara, n.d.-b). This approach helps content owners avoid potential religious conflicts. In addition, the script tends to restrict material referencing traditional beliefs and paganism, due to the fact that this material has the potential to incite conflict among practicing Muslims.

Some modern Muslims within the community view the revival and promotion of traditional culture as outdated and reject religious syncretism. The religious syncretism is common among Abkhazians, Ossetians, and the Adyghe ethnic group as a whole. The question of ethics arises regarding the legitimacy of making changes to ancient rituals. Ethnologists and anthropologists alike emphasize the significance of every

aspect of a ritual. It is unclear who possesses the expertise to identify important and insignificant elements of a ritual. The desire to please everyone and avoid offence can lead to distorted narratives. The fear of negative online feedback to some extent contradicts the idea of the Internet as a safe space. Despite high levels of economic development and strong democratic foundations in developed countries, achieving existential security remains impossible, no matter the place.

The issue of preserving traditional languages remains a deeply troubling concern. According to the 1989 census conducted during the Soviet period, the USSR was home to 128 nationalities, each with its own native language. However, amidst this rich cultural diversity, the Russian language assumed the role of a *lingua franca*, continuing the function it held during the Russian Empire.

In most national republics, bilingualism became widespread, significantly reshaping the linguistic landscape. Perspectives on this bilingualism range from positive to negative, reflecting both the opportunities and challenges posed by the interaction of languages. It is crucial to recognize that preserving one's native language is not merely a question of identity but also an essential aspect of safeguarding cultural heritage for future generations. In this context, the need to honor traditions and linguistic roots has become more urgent than ever.

In the article "Ecolinguistic Problems of the North Caucasus in the Context of Language Policy," Aysa I. Khalidov highlights the significance of these issues, offering a perspective that underscores that

the national-Russian bilingualism, cultivated since the Soviet times, undoubtedly has some positive effects along with negative effects, which have recently become much written and spoken about. It is clear that with all its positive aspects bilingualism has a downside as it leads to minoritization of other languages except for Russian. In any Russian republic the Russian language performs the maximum number of public functions and has actually replaced the "local" languages from all spheres except for family communication and a monolingual environment. This is the reason to speak about a serious danger to the Caucasian and other national languages in the Russian Federation. (Khalidov, 2017, p. 29)

A team of scientists, including biologists, mathematicians, and linguists, conducted research under the leadership of Lindell Bromham from the Australian National University (Bromham et al., 2022). Language oppression for 6,511 languages was simulated using the ordinal probit regression model. The level of extinction threat, as the dependent variable, was assessed according to the EGIDS scale, which evaluates the generational transmission and usage of a language. For independent variables, the researchers analyzed over 50 factors influencing language extinction, such as regional linguistic diversity, official language recognition, demographic characteristics, educational policies, environmental aspects, and socioeconomic indicators. The study revealed that Indigenous languages have a lower average risk of extinction when in contact with numerous other autochthonous languages within

a specific area. This phenomenon occurs because communities engaged in active interaction with speakers of other languages often become multilingual rather than losing their native language. Conversely, geographic isolation, such as living on an island, does not necessarily increase the likelihood of retaining one's native language. These findings highlight two distinct perspectives, each supported by significant research efforts.

The study led by Bromham underscores the critical role of social dynamics in language preservation. The research indicates that a linguistic ecosystem where languages coexist and interact fosters resilience among minority languages. Multilingualism becomes not only a practical necessity but also a form of cultural enrichment, while linguistic isolation often accelerates the loss of unique identities (Bromham et al., 2022).

In addition, the study raises important questions about the influence of educational policy and the recognition of languages as official languages. Languages granted official status benefit from greater support and funding, which enhances language retention among younger generations. In contrast, languages without state-level support are at greater risk of decline, leading to a disconnection from cultural heritage. Economic factors further complicate the situation. For example, in high-poverty regions heavily impacted by modernization and globalization, traditional languages are particularly vulnerable. Addressing these challenges requires an interdisciplinary approach to create conditions that foster sustainable language development.

Despite these efforts, the threat of language extinction remains real, especially among smaller ethnic groups both within and beyond the Russian Federation. In 2010, UNESCO published the *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger*, a landmark publication aimed at raising awareness about the loss of linguistic diversity and assessing the state of languages worldwide (UNESCO, 2010). This edition of the Atlas identifies approximately 2,500 languages, of which 230 have disappeared since 1950. Earlier versions were published in 1996 and 2001, while an interactive online version was launched in 2005.

The Atlas evaluates language vitality using nine criteria, including the total number of speakers, generational transmission, the scope of language use (e.g., in media), the attitudes of public officials, its official status, and the level of documentation and research. In this way, the Atlas serves not only as a guardian of linguistic heritage but also as a call to action for its preservation. According to data presented in the Atlas and its accompanying commentary, the Abaza language is currently at the stage described as follows:

The language is no longer being learned as the mother tongue by children in the home. The youngest speakers are thus of the parental generation. At this stage, parents may still speak their language to their children, but their children do not typically respond in the language. (UNESCO, 2010)

It is exactly for this reason that preserving and developing the Abaza language has become a central focus for the Abaza community. The Alashara organization plays a pivotal role in supporting initiatives such as language circles for various age groups and the Alashara language club. Prominent members of the community—writers, scientists, and cultural figures—are often invited to participate in these sessions. With the organization's assistance, there has also been published an online manual for learners of the Abaza language.

In 2016, a ten-year scientific program titled *Abaziny i abkhazy: Sokhranenie i razvitie iazykov i istoriko-kul'turnogo nasledii* [Abaza and Abkhazians: Preservation and Development of Languages and Historical and Cultural Heritage] was launched. This initiative was developed with the involvement of leading experts in Abaza language, history, and ethnography from Karachay-Cherkessia, Abkhazia, Moscow, Stavropol, and Türkiye. The World Abaza Congress (WAC), in collaboration with NGO Alashara, supplemented and approved a comprehensive program for the preservation and development of the Abaza language. As part of this initiative, the WAC Info Portal publishes a video lesson every weekday, each featuring three to five phrases or sentences. At the end of each month, a summary of the material covered is to be prepared and shared on the platform. These video lessons are available online (World Abaza Congress, n.d.).

The educational material was developed by Jonty Yamisha, a representative of the Circassian diaspora from the USA, who has been designing language programs for many years. Yamisha has launched the Optilingo¹¹ mobile application for teaching 20 languages, including Kabardinian. For this project, he generously provided a free database of over 3,500 commonly used words and phrases in English, covering 95% of everyday expressions.

The first video lesson was posted on June 1, 2020 and has been viewed 2,239 times. The lesson was also uploaded to YouTube, where it accumulated 376 views over four years with the comment section being disabled. On May 17, 2021, when the final lesson was published, a total of 140 video lessons had been released, with the final lesson achieving 6,481 views. Each lesson lasts no more than 50 seconds and features a brief description of the phrases being taught. These lessons are tailored for native speakers of English, Russian, Turkish, and Arabic.

The introduction of Abaza language video lessons has significantly increased interest in learning the language. Despite relatively modest YouTube viewership, the concise and informative format of the lessons has enabled a wider audience to engage with the rich culture of the Abaza people. Each short video provides an efficient way to learn basic phrases and expressions, making the process particularly valuable for language learners.

The teaching methodology prioritizes simplicity, focusing on commonly used vocabulary and phrases, which facilitates a straightforward language acquisition process. By limiting each lesson to five key expressions, learners are able to concentrate on the material and internalize it effectively. Additionally, the absence of comment sections ensures a distraction-free learning environment.

¹¹ <https://www.optilingo.com>

Through its video lessons, the Alashara organization continues to make significant contributions to the preservation and popularization of the Abaza language. These lessons have become a vital resource for individuals interested in exploring this unique linguistic heritage. By targeting a diverse audience of speakers from various linguistic backgrounds, the initiative expands the reach of Abaza culture and fosters its recognition on an international scale.

The community also declares its intention to revive the idea of shared identity of the untied Abaza people. In their offline interviews, the Abaza manifest a clear understanding of their identity, regardless of the fluency in their native language or place of residence. While recognizing their bond with the Abkhazians as a related ethnic group, the Abaza maintain a strong sense of their own distinct ethnic identity and the unique characteristics that define their people.

Abaza Inform | Murat Knukhov

The Instagram community was created by Murat Knukhov in December 2018 (Abaza Inform | Murat Knukhov, n.d.-a). The page functions as a blog, providing both educational and news-related content. The community's profile description states "The United People of Abaza," also using the name of the nation in the local languages. As of 2024, the number of subscribers is 23,800 people. Together with his family, Murat Knukhov has returned to Abkhazia, repatriating from the Karachay-Cherkess Republic. In the Repatriation Diary section of his Instagram blog, the author shares insights into life in Abkhazia, guiding subscribers through the nuances of adapting to the local culture. Following the War in Abkhazia (1992–1993), the idea of repatriation was gaining support among the Abaza people, especially for the Ashkhar subgroup. The Abaza, along with other ethnic groups of the North Caucasus, supported the Abkhaz people during the war. The Repatriation Diary aims to promote migration to Abkhazia among the Abaza, thus living among related ethnic groups helps to avoid potential assimilation concerns.

The analysis of the related Telegram channel suggests that the community also aims to bring together two ethnic groups (Abaza Inform | Murat Knukhov, n.d.-b). The channel features posts with poems and songs in both the Abaza and Abkhaz languages, as well as popular pop hits. In most of his videos, Murat Knukhov addresses the viewers as united people of Abaza, never distinguishing between the Abkhaz and Abaza cultures. Another section on the channel named "Did You Know It?" explores the legends, folklore, and traditional culture of both peoples. The channel also features educational content, such as interviews with specialists in Caucasian studies, historians, anthropologists, and politicians. The content of the community focuses primarily on ethnic-related topics, targeting an Abkhaz-Abaza audience. The subscribers learn about historical facts, traditions, and religious practices of both ethnic groups. Through the channel, the author seeks to highlight the unified ethnocultural space of the Abaza people.

The analyzed blog serves as a bridge between the Abaza people and Abkhaz society. The channel builds a narrative that views Abkhazia as a historical homeland for the Abaza people that is currently fulfilling the role of the older sibling. Content analysis of the related TikTok channel is not feasible in 2024.

The idea of unification for the Abaza people is presented as a strategy that benefits both ethnic groups. Migration of the Abaza to Abkhazia offers a potential solution to the demographic decline experienced over the last two centuries that was fueled by the Caucasian War, the Russian Revolution, and the collapse of the Soviet Union, resulting in mass migration, political repression, and wars. The idea of the Abaza repatriation received a positive response in the Abkhaz society. It is currently difficult to estimate the popularity of this cultural preservation strategy among the Abaza people. No opinion polls or studies have been conducted within the Abaza community to date.

Istanbul Abkhaz Kültür Derneği

Similar to other ethnic minorities living abroad, the Abkhaz and Abaza people established cultural centers in Türkiye, known as derneks. The Abkhaz and Abaza associations, along with other Caucasian derneks, have made it their mission to preserve traditional culture and their native languages. Aiming to broaden interactions between the dernek and the Abkhaz and Abaza communities, the Abkhaz Cultural Center in Istanbul established an online community on Facebook, a popular social network platform that can provide new opportunities for self-expression (Istanbul Abkhaz Kültür Derneği, n.d.). The Facebook community, established on July 26, 2012, has grown to 6,300 members. The online group surpasses the offline dernek community in Istanbul in size. The members of the Facebook group are not only Abkhaz, Abazins, Circassians, and Ossetians from Istanbul but also members from other online communities around the world, including Abkhazia. This expands the reach of communication, engaging a wider audience.

When examining the digital platforms of the diaspora community in Istanbul, it becomes apparent that there is a deliberate strategy to archive traditional practices by sharing images and videos of offline events. This common approach, adopted by many Caucasian derneks, includes weekly folk dance classes, learning the native language, and regular monthly meetings. The members of the dernek aim to foster interest in their cultural heritage among younger generations by bringing traditional Abkhaz cultural events online.

One of the essential attributes of the traditional Abkhaz society is Apsuara, the moral and ethical code of the Abkhaz people. The code regulates nearly all aspects of life, including traditional beliefs, which remain central to the Abkhaz identity today. The Abaza people share a similar moral and ethical code, known as Abazara. However, the Abkhaz and Abaza people in Türkiye predominantly profess Islam, which contradicts a common practice of performing traditional rituals, especially in urban settings. One example is prayers involving animal sacrifice. It is important to mention that although several Abazins villages can be found in Türkiye, a leading role in the online sphere and the urban environment is taken by the Abkhaz people, as they outnumber the Abaza. However, these conclusions are limited to urban environments and online communities only.

Looking into the dernek's Facebook page offers perspective on the rituals associated with the traditional Abkhaz religion, as well as religious holidays of other

faiths. The Abkhaz community in Türkiye places great importance on demonstrating their unity with Abkhazia, emphasizing their strong connection to its traditions and heritage. They express their identity online by celebrating significant dates and traditional holidays. Such celebrations have become as a unique platform for sharing Abkhaz cultural heritage with the world.

As an illustration, one of the most important holidays in Abkhazia is Azhyrnykhua. It is celebrated on the night of January, 13–14 to mark the beginning of the Abkhaz New Year. Azhyrnykhua is an old traditional holiday that remains relevant to the present day. It is associated with the cult of smithing and iron. It has recently become a celebrated holiday in the Abkhaz cultural center in Istanbul, since about 2015. The celebration, held on January 14th at the center, features traditional cuisine, folk dances, ethnic musical instruments, and Abkhaz folk songs. In 2019, the members of the center made a collective decision to include the traditional prayer service prior to the festive meal. While reconstructing the prayer service, the Abkhaz diaspora aimed to closely follow authentic tradition, adhering to the fullest extent of their abilities (Ayba, 2023).

According to the established tradition, the prayer service is held in the forge. As far as the sacred forge Azhyra is not available for them, the members create an improvised altar. The objects placed there possess a sacred meaning and are associated with smithery. Among the main items on the altar are an anvil, a hammer, tongs, a knife, a dagger, horse equipment, a sheepskin hat papakha, a bottle of red wine, a wine glass, a raw rooster carcass, and four candles. A chosen senior man from the community, who is considered suitable for the role, leads the prayer as an allocated priest. Before the prayer, the organizers talk about the holiday of Azhyrnykhua, its history and significance for the people in Abkhazia. Afterward, they invite the priest, presenting him with the heart and liver of a bull skewered on a branch, along with two loaves of bread. Then he says a prayer in the Abkhaz language. The entire ceremony was live-streamed on the community's Facebook page. The video has attracted over 10,600 views over the past four years, and the comments to it reveal some important viewpoints. The ceremony produced mixed reactions. While most comments are complimentary, offering standard greetings and congratulations, some show a contrasting response. One commentator suggests that the priest's words are empty and meaningless. Elaborating on this thought, the commentator states that an individual's freedom and worth in the eyes of Allah lies in living in accordance with Islam. Therefore, foolish words, games, and festivities will do nothing for the individual. The new generation, the commentator laments, is moving away from religion and Islam.

Among the Abkhaz diaspora in Türkiye, we can observe a confrontation between those who uphold classical Islamic principles and those who view traditional beliefs as an essential component of their ethnic identity. Despite online criticism and negative feedback, as well as internal conflicts, the Istanbul dernek community remains committed to the annual tradition, choosing to display it exclusively through photos on their Facebook account. The Abkhaz diaspora in Türkiye places importance on maintaining connections with the historical homeland and expressing their cultural identity and commitment to Abkhaz traditions. The analysis of social media posts

from Abkhaz and Abaza communities in Türkiye reveals a confrontation between classical Islamic principles and traditional beliefs as an essential component of the ethnic culture of both peoples. The Abkhaz and Abaza people abroad often refer to themselves as Abaza, showing the connection to their historical roots.

Conclusion

Currently, the most popular social network for representing the traditional culture of the Abkhaz and Abaza in the Russian-speaking segment of cyberspace is Instagram, despite its status as a banned social network in the Russian Federation. Abroad, Facebook traditionally holds the leading position. This platform is actively used by all Caucasus-originating minorities living outside their homelands to represent their identities.

Telegram remains an underutilized tool for effectively showcasing traditional culture or fostering communication between transcontinental diasporas. While Instagram and Facebook differ significantly in their interfaces, they equally serve the general demand for visual representation. For Abkhaz and Abaza communities abroad, it is essential to demonstrate their unity with their historical homeland—their sense of belonging and inseparability from traditions—through the photo and video documentation of traditional celebrations and their online display. In doing so, they assert that they remain an integral part of their people, despite living beyond their historical homeland. It is important for them to observe and practice the same religious traditions that are honored and respected “at home”.

The entire traditional culture of the Abkhaz and Abaza is deeply infused with a spiritual dimension, rooted in traditional beliefs—one of the key markers of their self-awareness. For the Abaza, who are an Indigenous small-numbered people, the photo and video documentation of reconstructed rituals serves as a means of promoting traditional culture. This is particularly significant given that, during the period of mass forced migration, much of their traditional calendar rites, oral folklore, and life-cycle rituals were almost entirely lost.

Analyzing social media posts from both foreign and Russian communities that depict religious practices in cyber communities reveals a clear tension between classical Islam and traditional beliefs within the Turkish Abkhaz and Abazian societies, as well as among Abaza living in Russia. These traditional beliefs remain an integral part of the ethnic culture of both peoples.

The Abaza minority, both abroad and in Russia, utilize identical digital tools provided by cyberspace, with the primary goal of preserving and promoting the ethical and philosophical doctrine of Apsuara/Abazara. Examining the content presented and the comments under these posts in foreign social media networks gives the impression of a blurred ethnic identity. Over two centuries of living outside their historical homeland have inevitably left a mark on the self-awareness of the Abaza people. There is a noticeable dominance of Abkhaz identity, despite the fact that the communities are ethnically mixed and have historically interacted closely. However, the numerical advantage of the Abkhaz has led to a degree of assimilation within the

minority groups themselves. Increasingly, Abkhaz and Abaza communities abroad identify as a single people—Abaza. A similar narrative is observed in the Russian online Abaza community, where there is an attempt to revitalize the idea of a unified Abaza people. The term Abaza is becoming firmly embedded in the vocabulary of online community members.

References

Abaza InformlMurat Knukhov. (n.d.-a). *Posts* [Instagram profile]¹². Instagram¹². https://www.instagram.com/abaza_inform

Abaza InformlMurat Knukhov. (n.d.-b). *Chat* [Telegram channel]¹³. Telegram¹³. https://t.me/abaza_inform

Alashara. (n.d.-a). *Chat* [Telegram channel]¹³. Telegram¹³. <https://t.me/alasharaorg>

Alashara. (n.d.-b). *Home* [YouTube channel]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/@abaza-alashara9966>

Alashara. (2022). *Fil'my-rekonstruktsii o traditsiiakh i tsennostiakh abazinskiy sem'i* [Reconstruction films about the traditions and values of the Abazi family] [YouTube playlist]. YouTube. <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLuey5ShXXtWiUikrjhleShHEOi-2PEQe>

Alashara. Razvitiye Abazino-Abkhazskogo etnosa [Alashara. Development of the bazino-Abkhazian ethnos]. (n.d.). *Posts* [Instagram profile]¹². Instagram¹². https://www.instagram.com/alashara_org

Albogachieva, M. S.-G. (2021). Abazinskii iazyk: Istoriia i sovremennost' [The Abazin language: History and present time]. *Ural Historical Journal*, 2, 90–98. [https://doi.org/10.30759/1728-9718-2021-2\(71\)-90-98](https://doi.org/10.30759/1728-9718-2021-2(71)-90-98)

Albogachieva, M. S.-G. (2023). Polevye issledovaniia v abazinskiykh aulakh Karachaevo-Cherkessii v 2023 godu: Kak abaziny sokhraniayut rodnoi iazyk [Field research in the Abaza villages of Karachay-Cherkessia in 2023: How Abazas preserve their native language]. *Kunstkamera*, 4, 158–166. [https://doi.org/10.31250/2618-8619-2023-4\(22\)-158-166](https://doi.org/10.31250/2618-8619-2023-4(22)-158-166)

Ayba, T. G. (2022a). Abkhazo-abazinskaia diaspora v Evrope. Nekotorye voprosy sokhraneniia traditsionnoi kul'tury abkhazov i abazin za rubezhom [Abkhaz-Abazin diaspora in Europe. Some issues of preserving the traditional culture of Abkhazians and Abazins abroad]. *History, Archaeology and Ethnography of the Caucasus*, 18(1), 154–166.

Ayba, T. G. (2022b). Abkhazskie i abazinskie kul'turnye tsentry v Turtsii i na Blizhnem Vostoke [Abkhaz and Abaza cultural centers in Türkiye and the Middle East]. *Kazachestvo*, 65, 27–36.

¹² Instagram™ is a trademark of Instagram Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. По решению Роскомнадзора, социальная сеть Instagram полностью заблокирована в России как экстремистская организация.

¹³ Telegram™ is a trademark of Telegram Group Inc., its operational center is based in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates.

Ayba, T. G. (2023). Osobennosti provedeniia moleniia Azh'yrnyxəa v sovremennoi Abkhazii i u turetskikh abkhazov [Features of the Azhyrnyxəa prayer ceremony in contemporary Abkhazia and among Turkish Abkhazians]. *History, Archeology and Ethnography of the Caucasus*, 19(3), 842–855. <https://doi.org/10.32653/CH193842-855>

Belorussova, S. Yu., & Siuziumov, A. A. (2024). Kartografiia v kiberetnografii (na primere korennykh malochislennykh narodov Rossii) [Cartography in cyberethnography (Using the example of the Indigenous peoples of Russia)]. *Siberian Historical Research*, 2, 93–119.

Bromham, L., Dinnage, R., Skirgård, H., Ritchie, A., Cardillo, M., Meakins, F., Greenhill, S., & Hua, X. (2022). Global predictors of language endangerment and the future of linguistic diversity. *Nature Ecology & Evolution*, 6(2), 163–173. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41559-021-01604-y>

Danilova, E. N. (1984). *Abaziny. Istoriko-etnograficheskoe issledovanie khoziaistva i obshchinnoi organizatsii. XIX vek* [Abazins. Historical and ethnographic study of the economy and community organization. 19th century]. Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo universiteta.

Dzhapua, Z. D., & Chekalov, P. K. (Eds.). (2019). *Abazinskie materialy A. N. Genko* [Abaza materials by A. N. Genko]. Academia.

Ganich, A. A. (2007). *Cherkesy v Iordanii: Osobennosti istoricheskogo i etnokul'turnogo razvitiia* [Circassians in Jordan: Features of historical and ethnocultural development]. The Institute of Asian and African Studies of MSU.

Genko, A. N. (2021). *Vvedenie v etnografiu Kavkaza* [Introduction to the Ethnography of the Caucasus]. Academia.

Golovnev, A. V., Albogachieva, M. S.-G., Belorussova, S. Yu., Belyaeva-Sachuk V. A., Kisser T. S., & Perevalova, E. V. (2022). *Korennye malochislennye narody Rossii: Etnokul'turnye proektsii* [Indigenous peoples of Russia: Ethnocultural projections]. MAE RAS.

Golovnev, A. V., Belorussova, S. Yu., & Kisser, T. S. (2021). *Virtual'naia etnichnost' i kiberetnografiia* [Virtual ethnicity and cyberethnography]. MAE RAS.

Inglehart, R. (2018). *Cultural evolution: People's motivations are changing, and reshaping the world*. Cambridge University Press.

Istanbul Abhaz Kültür Derneği. (n.d.). *Home* [Facebook page]¹⁴. Facebook¹⁴. <https://www.facebook.com/istanbulabhazkulturdernegi?mibextid=LQQJ4d>

Khalidov, A. I. (2017). Ecolinguistic problems of the North Caucasus in the context of language policy. *Journal of Siberian Federal University. Humanities & Social Sciences*, 10, 25–39.

Krylov, A. (2001). *Religiia i traditsii abkhazov (po materialam polevykh issledovanii 1994–2000)* [Religion and traditions of Abkhazians (on the materials of field research in 1994–2000)]. Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

¹⁴ Facebook™ is a trademark of Facebook Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. По решению Роскомнадзора, социальная сеть Facebook в России признана экстремистской организацией и заблокирована.

Kunizheva, L. (1974). *Domashnie promysly i remesla abazin v XIX — nachale XX veka* [Domestic activities and handicrafts of Abazins in the 19th and early 20th century] (Unpublished Candidate's dissertation). Institut etnografii imeni N. N. Miklukho-Maklaia AN SSSR.

Lieberman, K.-A. (2003). Virtually Vietnamese: Nationalism on the Internet. In R. C. Lee & S.-L. C. Wong (Eds.), *Asian America.net: Ethnicity, nationalism, and cyberspace* (pp. 71–97). Routledge.

Mukov, M. I. (2021). Problema abazinskoi diaspory i puti ee resheniia [Problems of the Abaza diaspora and ways to solve them]. In M. S.-G. Albogachieva (Ed.), *Kavkaz: Perekrestok kul'tur* [Caucasus: Crossroads of cultures] (pp. 85–93). MAE RAS.

O Edinom perechne korennykh malochislennykh narodov Rossiiskoi Federatsii. Postanovlenie Pravitel'stva Rossiiskoi Federatsii No. 255 [On the Unified List of Indigenous Minorities of the Russian Federation. Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 255]. (2000, March 24). <http://pravo.gov.ru/proxy/ips/?docbody=&nd=102065057&rdk=9>

Op-Ano Alashara. (n.d.). *Posts* [VK wall]. VK. https://vk.com/alashara_org

Pis'mennye iazyki mira: Rossiiskaia Federatsiia. Sotsiolingvisticheskaia entsiklopediia [Written languages of the world. Languages of the Russian Federation. Sociolinguistic encyclopedia]. (2000). The Institute of Linguistics of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

Rosstat [Federal State Statistics Service]. (2022). *Itogi VPN-2020. Tom 5 Natsional'nyi sostav i vladenie iazykami* [Results of the All-Russian Population Census 2020. Vol. 5 National composition and language proficiency]. https://rosstat.gov.ru/vpn/2020/Tom5_Nacionalnyi_sostav_i_vladenie_yazykami

UNESCO. (2010). *Atlas of the world's languages in danger* (3rd ed.). <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000187026>

World Abaza Congress. (n.d.). *Govorim na abkhazskom / Govorim na abazinskom* [We speak Abkhazian / We speak Abaza]. <https://www.abaza.org/category/projects/lang>



ARTICLE

Dynamics of “Conservative” and “Progressive” Narratives in the Era of Digital Transformation in Political Communications

Konstantin F. Zavershinskiy, Alexander I. Koryushkin

Saint Petersburg State University, Saint Petersburg, Russia

ABSTRACT

This study explores the distinct characteristics and roles of “conservative” and “progressive” narratives as part of an ambivalent process of diachronically organizing symbolic collective representations and exploring their influence on the political positioning of national communities. The digitalization of political communications has increased the variability of “temporal representations.” New approaches are thus needed to frame the conflict between tradition and innovation within the political and cultural dynamics of contemporary actors. Political elites across national communities are influenced by their various perceptions of the pace of political change and their expectations of the “present” and “future.” They employ different criteria for what constitutes a “recurrence” or “continuity.” It is therefore increasingly important to understand the relationship between “temporal regimes” in political memory and the processes of traditionalization within the binary coding of political communications as “conservative” or “progressive.” Temporal regimes in political communications are shaped by a trend toward homogenizing a community’s temporal representations, which fosters more stable conditions for integrating perceptions of the past, present, and future. Traditionalization is critical in institutionalizing and maintaining models of political solidarity. It serves as an essential cultural resource for the temporal structuring of the political sphere and countering political inversion and arbitrariness by political actors. The crisis in the temporal regime of the “modern era,” as articulated by contemporary globalist elites, has significantly heightened the risks of political asynchronicity within the national

memory of modern communities. Political elites and other actors are increasingly losing the ability to effectively control tradition-making, often replacing it with radical conservative traditionalization or progressivism. Drawing on the theoretical and practical insights of modern cultural sociology and political anthropology, the authors propose new theoretical approaches to understanding the role of temporal dimensions in the reproduction of political order within the context of neoliberal digitalization strategies.

KEYWORDS

temporal regimes, political memory, digitalization, traditionalization narratives, temporal crisis of political continuity

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The work was supported by the Russian Science Foundation (grant No. 24-28-01309), <https://rscf.ru/project/24-28-01309/>

Introduction

Studies are increasingly focusing on the ambivalent opposition between “traditional” and “innovative” elements in the political positioning of modern national communities that has caused by rising conflict-driven differentiation within and polarization of national and international political spaces. These changes are reflected in the dynamics of contemporary political communications. In our view, these phenomena are not solely the result of authoritarian consolidation or the disruptive activities of “invisible elites,” as suggested by many political scientists (e.g., Bexell et al., 2022; Dellmuth & Tallberg, 2023); they are also linked to a structural crisis in the “temporal order” of collective representations. Elite articulations and promotion of “traditional-values” narratives has intensified with the growing variability in perceptions of the past, the sense of “unpredictability of the present,” and the “uncertainty of the future.” Traditionalization is more frequently deployed by elites to stabilize political order and mobilize political actors in response to the growing risks of political decision-making.

The proliferation of “distinctions” in radical digital mobility fractures and disrupts the concept of continuity with the past. The “past” loses its retrospective sequence and certainty, distorting communicative understanding and social continuity. Instead of engaging in a constructive “dialogue with the past,” which would symbolically extend that past into the present and future, political actors now increasingly engage in a “digital arrest and capture” of the past, with “nostalgia for the past,” and the generational continuity previously central to human communities being lost as a result (Hoskins, 2017).

Positivist sociological literature on the political and cultural dynamics of elites often overlooks how social memory ensures continuity and disruption in the evolution

of political actors. Instead, social memory is reduced to memory politics, typically understood as historical politics. Pragmatism and the “epidemic of progressivism” in the radical liberalization of global political communications have come to represent the “highest rationality,” leading to an imbalance of preservation strategies and innovation that has given rise to the spread of “retrotopias,” a vision of the present through the lens of a “lost” or “abandoned” restructured past that fails to establish a connection between the present and a constructive future (Bauman, 2017).

The multiplicity of temporal representations highlights the need for models to synchronize or differentiate between the past, present, and future. New approaches to framing the political and cultural dynamics of elites are necessitated by the temporal dynamics of modern political communications, which increase the variability of “temporal flows” (the “heterogeneity” of social time) associated with the activities of numerous political actors. Political elites across national communities are guided by different criteria of continuity shaped by their perceptions of the pace of political change and their expectations of the “present” and “future.” Such processes stimulate the theoretical modeling of stable “time regimes”—temporal structures within national and civilizational communities associated with the homogenization and integration of perceptions of the past, present, and future.

The intensification of proxy wars and the propaganda potential of digital communications make it difficult for political elites and expert communities to predict which actions will achieve a sustainable political order and an effective position in the international arena. This compels political actors to articulate ambivalent discourses in the public sphere. These actors must balance “political-cultural constants” (political traditions and customs) with “innovations” and appeal to conservative or progressive values in legitimizing political decisions and mobilizing citizen engagement. The hybridization of national political cultures and the ambivalence of political-positioning discourses is intensified by the digital revolution. Thus, existing theoretical models of the functioning and recreation of political traditions should be adjusted, particularly in relation to the growing political differentiation of the ideologies of “conservatism” and “progressivism” and the conflict-driven dynamics of collective perceptions of the past, present, and future.

These processes underscore the importance of studying how political actors position themselves within the temporal structuring of national memory, which, in turn, shapes the narrative design of these ideological discourses. Political struggle is always intertwined with concepts of societal evolution and narratives of the past, present, and future. In this theoretical context, examining political actors’ specific discursive forms and their symbolic and self-presentation “within time,” as well as the impact of temporal structures on practices of political domination, is a promising avenue of inquiry. Time is understood here as a specific political-cultural “dimension of meaning,” a means of symbolically framing the events of political communication, where temporal symbolic structures serve as an “archiving” of the multiplicity of such events over time.

We argue that limiting the search for connections between the traditional and innovative activities of political actors to the process of traditionalization will merely

reproduce the past in the present or associate innovation exclusively with the future. A more nuanced analysis of this communicative dynamic should be understood within the semantics of an ambivalent process that seeks to ensure a temporal regime of political continuity in the binary coding of political communications as conservative/progressive. In the process of structuring and aligning elite and citizen expectations of the “future,” “present,” and “past” within the conservative/progressive semantic framework, specific temporal narratives emerge to organize political communications.

When there are no available cognitive schemes for the stable compatibility of temporal expectations, conflicts between elites and within civil communities intensify. It is during such periods that reflecting on political traditions and civilizational identity becomes particularly relevant, or discourses of revolutionary change arise. Temporal narratives, which represent “time regimes” and the “politics of time,” organize variable group expectations through the synchronization of the perceptions of political events considered significant by the collective. Given evolving and specific temporal regimes and the legitimization of political memory, analyzing the political and cultural specificity of competing temporal narratives and counter-narratives of conservatism/progressivism within national memory offers a theoretical foundation to forecast the full evolutionary potential of actors in a given political community.

In our view, studying the theoretical and methodological issues related to the influence of temporal structures on traditional and progressive narratives in modern political communications is essential for understanding the specific processes that ensure “symbolic constancy” in the political evolution of modern communities. This article addresses the following fundamental research questions: What are the theoretical and methodological foundations relied on in contemporary studies of traditionalization and social dynamics of conservative/progressive narratives in the political positioning of modern communities, and what theoretical problems and ways of overcoming these have been identified? What is the role of temporal regimes of national memory in shaping the political positioning of actors in conservative and progressive narratives? How does the digitalization of political communication impact the temporal orderliness and the political positioning of actors in political communications?

The Dynamics of Traditional and Innovative Elements in Contemporary Political Communications

Studies on actors’ political positioning often highlight the theoretical and methodological challenges of studying the role of political traditions and the practices which political elites use for their maintenance. Contemporary scholars view political traditionalization as a significant phenomenon tied to the process by which actors socially construct a society’s political identity through projections of the past. Virtually every study of the sociocultural dynamics of political actors notes that the positioning of elites impacts the effectiveness of the communicative structures that shape their self-identification and national identity policies through the cultivation of political traditions. It is also clear that the process of cultivating traditions in modern communications is not merely a matter of preserving “remnants” of past social realities—it also serves as a reservoir of meanings derived from the past and the present.

In public rhetoric and sociological literature, social traditions—especially political ones—are often described as relatively stable, deeply rooted patterns guiding everyday life and as ontological values and customs passed on over time. These traditions reflect a commitment (whether positive or negative) to the “political past,” including “past” institutions of power and ideological stereotypes (Gofman, 2015). Political traditions emerge as idealized and ideologized models of political order, which elites reference when formulating, adopting, and implementing policy decisions (Sudakov, 2004). The key “operators” of political traditions, alongside other “non-political” entities, are the political elites, as well as individual and group actors who consistently engage not only in preparing or discussing decisions but also in making them (Kaspe, 2022). While this conceptualization of political tradition is academically significant, it requires further clarification and theoretical-methodological refinement.

A more appropriate interpretation of the “traditional” in modern communication is as a reworking, reshaping, or repurposing of cultural forms from the past within and beyond institutional settings. Emerging traditions thus always constitute a variable share of the dynamic and the conservative (Buccitelli, 2018). The conceptual framework proposed by Hobsbawm provides a more grounded approach to understanding the process of traditionalization in contemporary society. His definition of contemporary traditions is generally acceptable if we moderate postmodernist interpretations of his concept of the “invented tradition” (Hobsbawm, 2012). According to Hobsbawm’s ideas, tradition can be defined as a set of practices governed, directly or indirectly, by formal and informal rules of a ritualistic and symbolic nature, aimed at instilling specific values and behavioral norms through repetition and by establishing continuity with a real or invented past.

These theoretical and practical challenges in the reproduction of contemporary traditions encourage a critical description and comparative analysis of the functions of political traditions as discursive structures of a community’s historical memory and an exploration of how diverse political ideas and knowledge of the past are transformed into stable political traditions. It is also necessary to identify the political and cultural factors that lead to their erosion and replacement by qualitatively different “guiding patterns.” Furthermore, when discussing collectively significant representations of “past” events and practices in political memory, we are dealing not with the events themselves but with expectations that impose or remove constraints on political action in the present and future. The labeling of a tradition as “real” always involves expectations of the “present” and “future.” Thus, the dynamics of the semantic structures of political memory are decisive in the emergence and description of political traditions.

Despite active public and academic debate about the significance of the correlation between traditional/innovative (conservative/progressive) elements in the political positioning of elites, these sociopolitical semantics are often reduced to specific dimensions (value-normative, socio-psychological, historical) and involve sharp ideological confrontations. The substitution of the ambivalent dynamics of traditional/innovative categories with the concepts of traditionalism and its opposites leads to homonymy (tradition–inertia, tradition–nostalgia, etc.) and the delocalization

and de-temporalization of traditions, detaching them from fixed spatial and temporal frameworks (Gofman, 2015, pp. 46–54). Radical attacks on the traditions and history of one's country and the replacement of deeply rooted cultural symbols with exaggerated forms of political correctness are, according to some studies, indicative of a "cultural disorder"—oikophobia, that is contempt or hatred of one's own sociocultural forms, and a civilizational crisis (Beckeld, 2022). Other unresolved questions include how and in what way "narratives of the traditional" and their symbolic representations are part of the process of political self-identification among modern elites and communities—and what determines their constructive "innovative" or destructive symbolic potential.

Many of those studying the role of traditions in politics have highlighted these theoretical and methodological challenges. However, we believe that a comprehensive study of the processual aspects of the social construction of traditions justifies viewing traditionalization as integral to the dynamics of a community's political memory. Traditionalization cultivates and prolongs patterns of constancy and stability over time. It is essential for the institutionalization and maintenance of political solidarity and serves as a significant cultural resource for the temporal structuring of the political sphere.

In other words, a stable political identity is always rooted in the temporal structure of memory, which is represented in narratives of continuity and permanence. The "temporal order" of political communications is linked to how participants in the political process position themselves in and perceive time (past, present, future), which predetermines the discursive and institutional dynamics of communities and their specific practices of solidarity. Examining the temporal regimes of the traditionalization process makes it possible to comparatively analyze the potential for ordering among political actors based on the dominant views of the significance of certain events from the past, present, and anticipated future.

Theoretical and Methodological Foundations for Studying the Temporal Structures of the Traditionalization Process

In this article, a complementary approach is proposed that combines cultural-sociological and political-anthropological models of temporal dynamics in sociocultural phenomena. This approach can function as a priority methodological strategy for examining the politico-cultural specificity of time-ordering practices in the political positioning of elites within the context of digitized political communications. It allows contemporary political culture to be interpreted as a historical form of political memory and the politics of memory, along with its digital transformations, as a form of symbolic politics¹. Prominent scholars of collective representations, such as

¹ In this article, the focus is on the temporal dynamics of symbolic structures in political memory, particularly their role in the political positioning of elites and maintaining order in political communications. We offer a more detailed interpretation of the cultural-sociological epistemology for studying the sociocultural dynamics of political memory, including its symbolic spatial-temporal boundaries, codes, and legitimization profiles, as well as the role of discursive structures in the processes of political identification and generational continuity of contemporary elites, in their previous works (Zavershinskiy & Koryushkin, 2022; Zavershinskiy et al., 2022).

Aleida Assmann and Jan Assmann, emphasize the strategic importance of studying processes that cultivate the “spirit of community,” which is crucial for developing a sense of solidarity in sociopolitical communications. They argue that the spirit of community is subject to erosion and distortion as mass digital communications blur the boundaries of rationality and social empathy. This is particularly evident in the rise of neoliberal and radically conservative political ideologies that often portray individuals as potential villains and aggressors (Assmann & Assmann, 2024).

In our view, the analytical framework for understanding the politico-cultural dynamics of elites is extended by incorporating temporal dimensions into the study of political actors’ communicative dynamics. Particularly relevant to analyzing elite political activity are the perspectives of researchers who emphasize the importance of theoretical modeling of social communication processes—depending on whether temporal or spatial factors predominantly influence the connections within political reality. Concepts like “past,” “present,” and “future” are intrinsic to communication, leading those who explore the inherent significance of culture and symbolic patterns to focus on time; those who emphasize material and organizational aspects of power tend to focus on space (Filippov, 2008, p. 109). Attention to these temporal options is essential for refining answers to key questions such as how and by whom political time is set and within which temporal horizons actors “initiate actions, make proposals, or self-present, thereby compelling others to respond” (Luhmann, 2007, p. 332). Lakoff (2009) highlights the dynamic and often conflicting “bi-conceptualism” of conservative and progressive ideologies in real-world politics from the perspective of contemporary cognitive science. The author identifies the roots of this bi-conceptualism in the brain’s narrative structures and in the anthropological practices of metaphorizing family communications (Lakoff, 2009, pp. 69–74).

This and similar epistemological strategies emphasize that the symbolic structures of political memory—represented in temporal narratives—are relatively independent, given their significant autonomy from social reality. The narrative core of collective representations is heterogeneous, differentiated by the polarization of binary distinctions that frame a given narrative. Temporal political narratives emerge from resolving the dichotomy inherent in the binary coding of power communications between conservative and progressive oppositions (Luhmann, 2001, pp. 24–44). They thereby introduce order to the interpretation of the temporal design of nationally significant events in collective memory.

Binary coding provides a symbolic classification of the world, structuring the temporal and spatial design of politically significant events (Alexander, 2006). Smith (2005) develops the theory of binary semantics in the civil sphere (pp. 14–24). By extension, the discursive core of the contemporary temporal regime of political communications is heterogeneous and differentiated by the polarization of conservative and progressive binaries, which shape traditional and innovative narratives. The contradictory representations of the conservative–progressive dynamic in academic and everyday political discourse reveal an ideological confrontation in conservative discourse; this advocates for the articulation of “the knowledge of tradition” to ensure social harmony and generational continuity based on “the constancy of moral truths”

and faith in a transcendental, “just” order rooted in “living diversity” (Kirk, 2001, 2023). In everyday life, such an order is defended within the discourse of “popular conservatism” using populist connotations that rely on the collective and ostensibly “natural” sense of unity, “constancy,” and “rational progress.” The liberal discourse is presented as in direct opposition to the conservative narrative and is focused on combating the emerging “progressophobia,” which originates within intellectual elites and transforms faith in the Enlightenment into a “quasi-religion” (Pinker, 2018, p. 218).

The semantic vacuum created by this dichotomy is filled by epistemological skepticism regarding the justification and truth of the concepts of liberalism and conservatism. This skepticism is context-dependent: conservatism is associated with a desire to preserve what individuals value, while progressivism is concerned with resisting limitations on the freedom to act in pursuit of vital life goals (Roeder, 2024). It is thus crucial to distinguish between progress as a universal principle for modern society and “progressivism,” which often manifests in a disdain for one’s own culture and a tendency to blame it for all societal ills (Bulut, 2024; Krause, 2023).

These narratives can be further classified according to the intensity of polarization within their binaries (share of dynamic to conservative elements) and by genres—from those with a weak potential for everyday temporalization of expectations to those with greater potential, such as the tragic/romantic or even apocalyptic genres, which are among the most impactful narrative forms. Mass collective representations at the everyday level may operate in a presentist mode, interpreting the past and future through the cognitive lens of the local present. Nevertheless, the elite may be driven by nostalgic expectations of the past or by revolutionary or radically conservative visions of the future, often foreshadowing apocalyptic societal transformations.

These various interdisciplinary methodological strategies share a common ontology: interpreting the communicative dynamics of social memory as a meaning-generating process represented in symbolic performative structures. The self-identification of political actors within a society is always, whether directly or indirectly, linked to the symbolic legitimization of their significance within the collective representations of its evolution over time, as the “synthesis of time and identity” is always mediated by memory (Assmann, 2010, p. 109).

At the same time, this variability, along with the empirical strategies used in narrative analysis, requires more comprehensive analytical models. Crucially, the specific process of traditionalization within the symbolic frameworks of political memory also depends on the temporal dynamics of the figurations of mnemonic actors in political memory. In this context, Olick’s theoretical insights are particularly important, as they help refine strategies to represent the symbolic structures of political narratives and their specificity within a given society. According to Olick (2016), describing the shifts in legitimization profiles within contemporary social memory requires analyzing the conflictual dynamics of the symbolic contours of national memory; these symbolic contours include such competing symbolic components as images of the past, political characteristics of elites, typologies of heroism, notions of duty, guilt, and responsibility, as well as prioritized strategies and practices for combating “enemies” that determine the emergence and evolution of legitimization profiles (Olick, 2016, pp. 36–76). This

methodological framework makes possible a discussion of the temporal specificity of time images, the synchronization or asynchronization of heroic and sacrificial hierarchies, shifts in strategies for cultivating traditions and innovations, and changes in strategies for humanizing or dehumanizing enemies.

The comparative analysis of the temporalization of legitimation profiles in political memory becomes particularly significant in studying the politico-cultural dynamics of national identity narratives. By articulating the specific combination of conservative and progressive legitimation profiles, researchers can clarify the process of temporalizing communities and identify how to code the political practices of actors based on the conservative/progressive binary. When examining the process of traditionalization and its narratives, the dynamics of temporal regimes within political memory that define and redefine the symbolic figures within legitimation profiles must be considered. The specificity of overcoming the conservative/progressive binary (and the resulting narratives of continuity) depends on which temporal references (present, past, or future) dominate. Modeling the temporal regimes of society is promising for a comprehensive study of the role and significance of temporal dimensions in the dynamics of binary coding in political positioning.

Temporal Regimes as Methods of Ordering Political Communications

The concept of “memory regimes” is increasingly being used to explore the relationship between collective perceptions of time and identity in the formation of sociocultural communities. Despite the focus on the historical and temporal specificity of memory regimes in political studies, this concept is more often used for comparative functional analysis of memory politics and commemoration practices. In such analyses, historicity tends to be viewed as a byproduct of how elites socially construct public space and state identity. When the value-normative parameters of memory regimes and their narrative structures are examined, the temporal dimension is often reduced to the dichotomous value orientations of autocratic and democratic actors and the institutionalization of memory politics (Malinova, 2020, p. 21).

Researchers focusing on the “sociology of memory space” may reference the works of Assmann but often overlook the heuristic potential of the concept of memory regimes. Their aim when introducing the concept of the “temporal regime of culture” to study the sociocultural dynamics of social memory was to identify the “temporal organization and orientation” of society—the specific cognitive schemes of collective interactions and identification practices (Assmann, 2017a). Assmann identifies the uniqueness of social memory in the modern era through its symbolic representations of the “past” and “future” and in the “referential frameworks of modernity.” They characterize the modern era as a “time of rupture,” a “fictitious new beginning,” “creative destruction,” the “emergence of the concept of ‘the historical,’” and “acceleration.” In Assmann’s view, these features define how actors’ expectations and activities can vary semantically. In the contemporary era, which some researchers refer to as “postmodern,” what makes societies “modern” is that they exist in a highly conflictual regime of “dynamic stabilization.” This regime requires growth, acceleration, and

innovation to maintain its structure and institutional status (Torres & Rosa, 2021, p. 520). Many researchers link this intensification of the “traditional/innovative” conflict to the inevitable “traumatic demands” of these dynamics. These are demands for emotional, institutional, and “symbolic compensation” through new interpretations of past events. The new interpretations change the role structure and system of continuity and obligations among participants in the political process to accord with this new vision (Alexander, 2012).

Assmann’s proposed strategy for studying temporal regimes in modernity can be refined through existing models of the temporalization of modern collective memory. A successful example, in our view, is the study of how collective memory influences the positioning of political elites in the international arena (Bachleitner, 2021). According to Bachleitner, to exist and achieve sociopolitical stability, a society must be capable of prolonging itself over time and of acquiring performative public memory and state identity. This identity should elevate the expectations of political actors beyond the available political realities and past interpretations of political reality. Bachleitner does not use the concept of a temporal regime, but their concepts of temporal security, which is based on the theory of ontological security in communities, and temporal regimes emphasize the connection between collective memory (“being-in-time”) and identification processes based on constructing national narratives about the interrelation of the past, present, and future. The political-cultural triggers of this process, accompanied by public reflection and intense debates on ontological security, include the interpretation of traumatic events—real or imagined—and the spread of anxiety and public shame.

When answering the question “who and how initiates time,” of particular interest is the researcher’s identification of the processual phases of establishing a stable identity; this process influences political elites and legitimates their policies domestically and internationally. As per Bachleitner’s approach, the actions of political actors occur along the “axis” of temporalization of ideas about critical political events of the past, essential for the emergence of a particular nation within the context of the dynamics of perceptions of the past and future from the present. Perceptions of “temporal security” as an effective ideal dimension of the specificity of political positioning in national communities arise in the process of constructing political strategy, public identity, state policy, and national values. According to Bachleitner (2021), this analytical model of temporalization of collective memory, through which this memory acquires political-cultural specificity through perceptions of “temporal security” and “temporal continuity,” allows the combination of socio-psychological and sociological understandings of collective memory’s influence on national identity and state actions in the international arena.

Based on the model’s basic premises, and softening its socio-psychological contexts related to the model of cultural trauma, the process of establishing a temporal regime in a given society can be interpreted as follows. The process is initiated when elites develop an anti-crisis political strategy that leads to the reconstruction of public policy and widely shared perceptions of the country’s politico-cultural identity. This then stimulates the construction of a state identity and social consensus on national values.

The temporal regime of modern societies thus arises or changes during the process of strategic political positioning by elites with respect to other political communities. The “symbolic constants” of the country’s public identity are established as prerequisites for the domestic contours of the temporal regime. This fosters confidence in the consistency of political decisions and the longevity of state institutions.

The process concludes with the articulation and sacralization of national values, resulting in a public political axiology—ideologically and morally justified narratives about the “correctness” and “justice” of the political course pursued by elites. Ensuring sustainable continuity in elite activities cannot be reduced to their ability to cultivate and protect the traditions of the past. The emergence of political traditions and their effectiveness depends heavily on the phase of the temporal regime in which society “exists,” the specificity of the political strategies prioritized by elites, the characteristics and practices by which public and state identity are constructed, and the state of collective expectations and the interpretative abilities of discursive institutions to constructively rethink past experiences.

An analytical model of temporal regimes and their sociological operationalization developed to study how modern digital technologies influence political communication cannot exclude the highly relevant interdisciplinary approach of Coeckelbergh. In *Digital Technologies, Temporality, and the Politics of Co-Existence* (Coeckelbergh, 2022), the author introduces concepts of the anthropochrone and technoperformances of time, along with related post-anthropochronic and hyper-anthropochrone representations of time and transhumanistic post-anthropochronic technologies. These concepts are employed to analyze the processes of evolution, synchronization, and desynchronization of heterogeneous narratives of time in various sociopolitical spaces shaped by qualitative changes in information storage and dissemination technologies, particularly those influenced by artificial intelligence (Coeckelbergh, 2022). Torres’s (2021) monograph, *Temporal Regimes: Materiality, Politics, Technology*, is a recent comprehensive attempt to summarize the various approaches to theoretical modeling temporal regimes. In our view, this work is valuable both for its attempts to systematize approaches to the typology of the sociopolitical specifics of temporal regimes and its potential to operationalize sociological studies on the dynamics of temporal regimes. The core premise of Torres’s conceptual ideas is that time—the understanding of the experience of change—and the formation of a temporal regime are connected by repeatability and stability in the production of ideas about time. Temporal regimes are the result of a sociocultural configuration that arises in a society, based on which the thematization of ideas about time occurs. A temporal regime arises from tendencies toward homogenization and creates stable conditions for the sustained combination of ideas about the interconnection of the past, present, and future. In this way, the temporal regime establishes the conditions for the dominance of ideas about the direction of change—linearity or cyclicity, presentism or futurism, acceleration or deceleration. A temporal regime creates certain life habits or structures to achieve a specific result.

Describing the specificity of existing temporal regimes requires a comprehensive analysis of temporal ideas based on parameters such as repeatability, articulability, and governmentality (Torres, 2022, pp. 1–38). “Repeatability” refers to the recurrence

of temporal perspectives and how the past shapes the present and is “held” in it; “articulability” refers to the existence of clear ideas about the patterns of temporal dynamics and the direction of temporal flows; and “governmentality” refers to a set of performative norms that govern or “program” collective actions to change the social order. In our view, such derivatives make it possible to identify the fundamental processes in the dynamics of temporal regimes and provide a foundation for comparative studies of time regimes across national communities. It is evident that leaving aside critical reflection on their specifics the basic tenets of these concepts are complementary to the politico-cultural dimensions of the traditionalization process in national communities noted above. Temporal regimes can contribute to the creation of communities or, conversely, hinder this by coordinating events in individual and collective life. Political time is a complex interplay of synchronies and temporal heterogeneity, which can coexist within a single temporal regime, influencing the level of conflict and the specificity of traditionalization. Thus, the distinctions between “conservative” and “progressive” do not merely manifest in ideological value orientations or in the rejection or acceptance of “innovation” and “tradition.” Rather, they manifest in the understanding of the processes as acceleration and repetition, as well as the particularities of articulating and administering their symbolic representations. Thus, progress in modern communications does not negate tradition; instead, they serve as potential resources for future use. Meanwhile, conservative narratives do not reject progress but emphasize the search for normative and institutional constants amid ongoing change. Modern temporal regimes take on especially conflictual dynamics in the context of the digitization of social memory, which introduces specific methods of marking space and temporal vision for organizing political activities.

The Political and Cultural Dynamics of Modern Temporal Regimes and the Crisis of Traditions in the Digital Age

The scholarly literature on the influence of political-cultural practices in the digital era is diverse. Many researchers emphasize that with the breakdown of grand political narratives driven by the digitization of a “culture of differences,” there is an increase in the autonomy and differentiation of symbolic coding within distinct communicative environments. This shift leads to a decline in the influence of previously dominant “symbolically generalized media” (Luhmann, 2006, pp. 46–48). Such processes disrupt the interconnectedness of communication systems and contribute to the erosion of temporal structures in political memory.

In contemporary interdisciplinary research, particularly in digital memory studies over the past decade, scholars have extensively analyzed the impact of digitization on social communications, the formation of “transnational memory,” the specifics of network interactions, the functioning of mass media on digital platforms, and the digitization of commemorative institutions (Bond et al., 2017; Garde-Hansen, 2011; Helgesson & Svenungsson, 2018). Despite the wide range of themes, research on the political-cultural dimensions of political memory in the digital age remains ambivalent regarding the impact of digitization on the

political positioning of actors. The assessments range from positive appraisals and skepticism to apocalyptic predictions regarding the influence of digital technologies on elite dynamics. Overall, the digital revolution contributes to the formation of new elite segments and a digital culture—a specific ideological, value-normative, and worldview structure—and the development of a “digital political reality” (Schradie, 2019). This reality is expressed in global projects for developing metaverses that create extra-state and extra-legal ontological digital formats of socio-technological activity in which interactions are coded by corporate requirements and technical standards (Fukuyama, 2018).

There is also optimism regarding the expansion of public spaces and increased participation in the political process through online interactions and electronic governance. Researchers argue that electronic governance is a positive example of rejecting traditional political intermediaries and shifting elite attention toward improving specific everyday practices of political communication (West, 2005). This “disintermediation,” or removal of intermediaries, reduces the costs of content production through web technologies, and their horizontal nature allows citizens to create content that reaches a wide audience. The main goal of this transformation in models of communication is the spread of content, messages, opinions, emotions, and ideas that do not originate from intermediary elites. Researchers suggest that digital public spaces are thus more pluralistic and better equipped to provide content for public discussion (Robles-Morales & Córdoba-Hernández, 2019, p. 141).

However, a critical analysis of the political-cultural consequences of the Internet’s supposed promotion of democracy and public dialogue remains dominant. Rather than fostering inclusivity, the Internet is more often associated with “fragmentation and polarization,” a decline in the symbolic effectiveness of commitments to social equality and justice, a lack of shared meaning, and numerous “information bubbles.” In “communicative capitalism,” there is a merging of surveillance capital and the surveillance state. Big Data represents the power of “Big Brother” and “big capitalist business” (Fuchs, 2019, p. 58). “Surveillance capitalism” fosters networks that generate a hierarchical distribution of opportunities. In communication processes, those who most successfully monetize their hierarchical position within this space benefit the most (Dean, 2019, p. 178). “Communicative capitalism,” accelerated by digitization, undermines the concepts of democracy and political solidarity while promoting discourses of victimization.

The semantic structures of political memory emerging under the influence of digitization are often more performative than the actors, institutions, and organizations that created and hoped to control them. For example, conservative narratives intended to bring temporal order may instead trigger revolutionary processes. However, ostensibly progressive, democratic, and neoliberal political counter-narratives can lead to total symbolic decoding and delegitimization of the political order. Culturally and anthropologically oriented authors attribute such processes to the affirmation of a modernist Occidental identity (“occidentalism”) based on a temporal regime of continuous change in which individuals invest in new identifications understood

through the lens of individualistic self-development. The inability to achieve such self-development leads to an identification crisis, stimulating a return to conservative forms of traditionalism and the intellectual cynicism of postmodernism, culminating in clinical affective narcissism (Friedman, 2019).

Many researchers characterize the temporal regime of late modernity in terms of the temporal inversions of the past, present, and future in collective representations. Assmann (2017b) notes that in the digital age and amid the intensive development of hypervisualization techniques, new images of the past are constantly emerging. This trend is highly ambivalent; it is unclear whether this will stimulate and intensify collective hostility and nationalist narcissism or make the process of rethinking the national past more inclusive (Assmann, 2017b). The ambivalence stems from the fact that digital communication technologies, which are associated with the ideology of “continuous progress,” generate ever-new forms of communication control, leading to a decline in sociopolitical imagination and effectively canceling the “future.”

Instead of forecasting the future, people receive “consumer gadgets” and audiovisual “memory exoskeletons.” This ideology of progress masks the absence of a positive future perspective and helps reactivate radical conservative discourses. The culture of the past is embedded in the sociocultural “post-future,” emphasizing the crucial aspect of forming a culture of the past, while the (re) affirmation of a positive present seems increasingly utopian. There is a growing inability and consumerist unwillingness to actively participate in connecting the “past” with the idea of the future. This factor distinguishes the current memory regime from that of the 19th and especially the 20th centuries when positive utopias of the future emerged. People experience pressure both from the loss of the future and “through numerous intimate and affective interpretations of the past, the loss of our past.” Instead of processing the past, it is being “plundered,” producing easily disappearing “ghosts of the past” (Pogačar, 2017).

Neoliberal deconstructions of temporal regimes and their digital audio-visualizations of the horizons of political memory lead to a reconsideration of modern temporal structures, clashing the “legacy of the Enlightenment with neoliberal modernity.” Their diverse understandings of the past result in contemporary elites losing the meaningful framework for making political decisions as the stability of present perceptions erodes, diminishing their capacity to adapt to political realities. This gives rise to the dictatorship of “short-term memory” and a kind of political “infantilism,” manifesting in a retreat from positive and negative expectations. The processes transpiring in the political memory of modern society under the influence of digital communications significantly increase the risks of political elites making irresponsible decisions. As a result, the political elite and other political actors will lose the ability to effectively control the process of positive traditionalization, replacing it with far-right conservative narratives or radical progressivism. One can only hope that the traumatic experience of emerging from the current temporal crisis and transitioning to more balanced temporal regimes of political positioning will be guided by positive-utopian expectations rather than apocalyptic projections.

Conclusion

The relationship between traditional and innovative elements in the activities of contemporary political elites should not be simplistically reduced to merely reproducing an archaic past while radically positioning toward an innovative future. Modern political communications amplify the variability of “temporal flows”—the “heterogeneity” of social time—that are tied to the activities of numerous political actors. This amplified variability demands new approaches to addressing the conflict between tradition and innovation in the political-cultural dynamics of today’s elites. Political elites across nations have various criteria for continuity that are shaped by their perceptions of political change and their expectations of the present and the future.

We argue that in modern communications, political tradition and traditionalization should be understood as the result of processing temporal political-cultural forms of the past, projected onto the present and the future. This happens in the political memory of society at the institutional and everyday levels, making the concept of a “temporal regime of political memory” especially significant. Such a regime emerges from trends toward homogenization, creating stable conditions for integrating perceptions of the past, present, and future. This temporal regime underpins the dominance of views on the direction of change, including the reproduction of political traditions. Political time is a complex blend of synchrony and temporal heterogeneity. These coexist within a single regime and determine the prevailing level of conflict and the specifics of “repetition” (traditionalization), retaining past experiences in the present and extending them into the future.

A comprehensive analysis of this communicative dynamic between tradition and innovation is crucial. This analysis reveals the complex and ambivalent process of establishing a temporal regime of political continuity through the binary dynamics of conservative versus progressive forces in political communication. The alignment within this conservative/progressive framework of elite and public expectations about the past, present, and future generates distinct narratives that structure and guide political discourses.

Modern traditionalization is key in the community dynamics of political memory, cultivating and extending patterns of repetition, permanence, and stability over time. It is central to institutionalizing and maintaining political solidarity, serving as a crucial cultural resource for the temporal structuring of the political sphere and resisting political inversion and arbitrariness in the activities of today’s diverse elites. The ability to overcome the conservative/progressive binary and the resulting narratives of repetition hinges on which temporal references dominate: the present, past, or future. Examining the specifics of temporal regimes in the traditionalization process enables a comparative analysis of how political actors “order” themselves based on their perceptions of significant past, present, and future events.

Driven by neoliberal “heirs of modernity,” the digital revolution intensifies the hybridization of national political cultures and fuels the ambivalence in political positioning and national traditions. The authors side with those who argue that modern digital communications in the West are trapped in a “post-future” crisis

(postmodernism, meta-modernism, transhumanism, etc.), with the attempt to “reaffirm” a positive present seen as a retrotopia and a civilizational crisis, manifesting in the rise of oikophobia. This fragmented understanding of the past causes global elites to lose their framework for decisive political action; as the stability of present realities fades, their ability to adapt is crippled. The result is a dictatorship of “short-term memory,” the death of positive utopias, and a kind of “political infantilism,” with elites retreating from future expectations—both positive and negative. As the crisis of modernity’s temporal regime shaped by neoliberal elites takes hold, it heightens the risk of political asynchrony and gives rise to either radical conservatism or unchecked progressivism.

References

- Alexander, J. C. (2006). *The civil sphere*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195162509.001.0001>
- Alexander, J. C. (2012). *Trauma: A social theory*. Polity Press.
- Assmann, A. (2017a). *Rasपालas’ sviaz’ vremen? Vzlet i padenie temporal’nogo rezhima Moderna* [Time out of Joint? The rise and fall of the temporal regime of Modernity] (B. Khlebnikov, Trans.). Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie. (Originally published in German 2013)
- Assmann, A. (2017b). Transnational memory and the construction of history through mass media. In L. Bond, S. Craps, & P. Vermeulen (Eds.), *Memory unbound: Tracing the dynamics of memory studies* (pp. 65–80). Berghahn Books. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781785333019-005>
- Assmann, A., & Assmann, J. (2024). *Gemeinsinn: Der Sechste, Soziale Sinn* [Public spirit: The sixth, social sense]. C.H. Beck.
- Assmann, J. (2010). Communicative and cultural memory. In A. Erll & A. Nünning (Eds.), *Cultural memory studies: An international and interdisciplinary handbook* (pp. 109–118). De Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110207262.2.109>
- Bachleitner, K. (2021). *Collective memory in international relations*. Oxford University Press.
- Bauman, Z. (2017). *Retrotopia*. Polity Press.
- Beckeld, B. (2022). *Western self-contempt: Oikophobia in the decline of civilizations*. Cornell University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781501763205>
- Bexell, M., Jönsson, K., & Uhlin, A. (Eds.). (2022). *Legitimation and delegitimation in global governance: Practices, justifications, and audiences*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780192856111.001.0001>
- Bond, L., Craps, S., & Vermeulen, P. (Eds.). (2017). *Memory unbound: Tracing the dynamics of memory studies*. Berghahn Books. <https://doi.org/10.3167/9781785333002>

Buccitelli, A. B. (2018). Introduction. In A. B. Buccitelli (Ed.), *Race and ethnicity in digital culture: Our changing traditions, impressions, and expressions in a mediated world* (Vol. 1, pp. 1–18). ABC-CLIO.

Bulut, U. (2024, July 18). Unmasking progressivism: An interview with Stelios Panagiotou. *The European Conservative*. <https://europeanconservative.com/articles/interviews/unmasking-progressivism-an-interview-with-stelios-panagiotou/>

Coeckelbergh, M. (2022). *Digital technologies, temporality, and the politics of co-existence*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-17982-2>

Dean, J. (2019). Critique or collectivity? Communicative capitalism and the subject of politics. In D. Chandler & C. Fuchs (Eds.), *Digital objects, digital subjects: Interdisciplinary perspectives on capitalism, labour, and politics in the age of big data* (pp. 171–182). University of Westminster Press. <https://doi.org/10.16997/book29.n>

Dellmuth, L., & Tallberg, J. (2023). *Legitimacy politics: Elite communication and public opinion in global governance*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009222020>

Filippov, A. F. (2008). O poniatii teoreticheskoi sotsiologii [On the notion of theoretical sociology]. *The Russian Sociological Review*, 7(3), 75–114.

Friedman, J. (2019). *PC worlds: Political correctness and rising elites at the end of hegemony*. Berghahn Books. <https://doi.org/10.3167/9781785336720>

Fuchs, C. (2019). Karl Marx in the age of big data capitalism. In D. Chandler & C. Fuchs (Eds.), *Digital objects, digital subjects: Interdisciplinary perspectives on capitalism, labour, and politics in the age of big data* (pp. 53–71). University of Westminster Press. <https://doi.org/10.16997/book29.d>

Fukuyama, F. (2018). Against identity politics: The new tribalism and the crisis of democracy. *Foreign Affairs*, 97(5), 90–114.

Garde-Hansen, J. (Ed.). (2011). *Media and memory*. Edinburgh University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780748647071>

Gofman, A. B. (2015). *Traditsiia, solidarnost' i sotsiologicheskaiia teoriia. Izbrannye teksty* [Tradition, solidarity and sociological theory. Selected works]. Novyi khronograf.

Helgesson, S., & Svenungsson, J. (Eds.). (2018). *The ethos of history: Time and responsibility*. Berghahn Books. <https://doi.org/10.3167/9781785338847>

Hobsbawm, E. (2012). Introduction: Inventing tradition. In E. Hobsbawm & R. Terrence (Eds.), *The invention of tradition* (pp. 1–14). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107295636.001>

Hoskins, A. (2017). The restless past: An introduction to digital memory and media. In A. Hoskins (Ed.), *Digital memory studies: Media pasts in transition* (pp. 1–24). Routledge.

Kaspe, S. (2022). V etom shkafu mnogo skeletov: Politicheskoe ispol'zovanie traditsii v sovremennoi Rossii [Many skeletons in this closet: The political use of tradition in modern Russia]. *The Russian Sociological Review*, 21(1), 9–37. <https://doi.org/10.17323/1728-192x-2022-1-9-37>

Kirk, R. (2001). *The conservative mind: From Burke to Eliot*. Regnery.

Kirk, R. (2023). *The politics of prudence*. Regnery.

Krause, P. (2023, May 16). Understanding progressivism. *Discourses on Minerva*. <https://minervawisdom.com/2023/05/16/understanding-progressivism/>

Lakoff, G. (2009). *The political mind: A cognitive scientist's guide to your brain and its politics*. Penguin Books.

Luhmann, N. (2001). *Vlast'* [Power]. Praxis. (Originally published in German 1988)

Luhmann, N. (2006). *Differentsiatsiia* [Differentiation]. Logos. (Originally published in German 1997)

Luhmann, N. (2007). *Vvedenie v sistemnuu teoriiu* [Introduction to systems theory]. Logos. (Originally published in German 2002)

Malinova, O. Iu. (2020). Rezhim pamiati kak instrument analiza: Problemy kontseptualizatsii [Memory regime as a tool of analysis: Problems of conceptualization]. In A. I. Miller & D. V. Efremenko (Eds.), *Politika pamiati v sovremennoi Rossii i stranakh Vostochnoi Evropy: Aktory, instituty, narrativy* [Politics of memory in contemporary Russia and in the countries of Eastern Europe: Actors, institutions, and narratives] (pp. 26–39). EUSP Press.

Olick, J. K. (2016). *The sins of the fathers: Germany, memory, method*. University of Chicago Press.

Pinker, S. (2018). *Enlightenment now: The case for reason, science, humanism, and progress*. Viking.

Pogačar, M. (2017). Culture of the past: Digital connectivity and dispotentiated futures. In A. Hoskins (Ed.), *Digital memory studies: Media pasts in transition* (pp. 27–47). Routledge.

Robles-Morales, J. M., & Córdoba-Hernández, A. M. (2019). *Digital political participation, social networks and big data: Disintermediation in the era of web 2.0*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-27757-4>

Roeber, B. (2024). *Political humility: The limits of knowledge in our partisan political climate*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003439547>

Schradie, J. (2019). *The revolution that wasn't: How digital activism favors conservatives*. Harvard University Press.

Smith, P. (2005). *Why war? The cultural logic of Iraq, the Gulf War, and Suez*. University of Chicago Press.

Sudakov, S. S. (2004). *Poniatie traditsii v sovremennom amerikanskom liberalizme* [The notion of tradition in contemporary American liberalism] [Candidate's dissertation, Kaliningrad State University]. DissersCat. <https://www.disserscat.com/content/ponyatie-traditsii-v-sovremennom-amerikanskom-liberalizme>

Torres, F. (2021). *Temporal regimes: Materiality, politics, technology*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003180876>

Torres, F., & Rosa, H. (2021). Acceleration theory, temporal regimes, and politics today. An interview with Hartmut Rosa. *Res Publica. Revista de Historia de las Ideas Políticas*, 24(3), 519–523. <https://doi.org/10.5209/rpub.79249>

West, D. M. (2005). Scope, causes, and consequences of electronic government. In *Digital government: Technology and public sector performance* (pp. 1–21). Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400835768.1>

Zavershinskiy, K. F., & Koryushkin A. I. (2022). Political socialization in a changing society: A crisis of value orientations or asynchronization of national memories? *Changing Societies & Personalities*, 6(1), 35–55. <https://doi.org/10.15826/csp.2022.6.1.162>

Zavershinskiy, K. F., Koryushkin, A. I., & Czajowski, A. (2022). Political identity and national memory: The conflict of contemporary political narratives. *Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University. Philosophy and Conflict Studies*, 38(1), 82–93. <https://doi.org/10.21638/spbu17.2022.107>



ARTICLE

Phenomenon of Altruism: Current Youth Perceptions From the Historical and Sociological Perspectives

Natalya L. Antonova

Ural Federal University, Yekaterinburg, Russia

Ilia E. Levchenko

Ural Federal University, Yekaterinburg, Russia

Natalia G. Popova

Institute for Philosophy and Law of the Ural Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Yekaterinburg, Russia

ABSTRACT

Perceptions held by youth regarding altruism are analyzed using the findings of empirical research. The article proposes a historical and sociological conceptualization of the phenomenon of altruism, which is interpreted as a set of actions and interactions between individuals and groups intended to benefit another person. Drawing on interview materials ($n = 34$), the authors argue that the younger generation is oriented toward prosocial activities (banal altruism) in everyday practices and believe altruists to be selfless, responsive, caring, well-bred, and kind people. Young people adopt the Golden Rule of morality, believing that altruistic acts promote social solidarity and justice. A small proportion of youth exhibit egocentric attitudes, which can be attributed to rationalized thinking, fear, and negative experiences of prosocial activities. The informants are selective in their willingness to engage in altruistic acts, focusing primarily on personal, reciprocal, public, and non-institutional altruism. The study revealed that youth consider altruism to be a form of local proactive normative behavior, which indicates the social potential of youth to reproduce social order and social sustainability through altruistic practices in everyday life.

Received 23 October 2024

Accepted 23 February 2025

Published online 30 April 2025

© 2025 Natalya L. Antonova, Ilia E. Levchenko,

Natalia G. Popova

n.l.antonova@urfu.ru, i.e.levchenko@urfu.ru,

ngpopova@list.ru

KEYWORDS

altruism, altruist, prosocial behavior, egoism, youth, sociological concepts of altruism

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research was funded by the Russian Science Foundation and the Government of the Sverdlovsk Oblast No. 24-28-20018, <https://rscf.ru/project/24-28-20018/>

Introduction

As a social phenomenon, altruism has been the subject of a special sociological analysis for a long time. Introduced into scholarly discourse by the founder of sociology, Auguste Comte, the concept of altruism continues to be relevant under modern conditions both in terms of theoretical and methodological understanding and in the context of empirical research on prosocial attitudes and behavioral actions.

The interest in the phenomenon of altruism can be attributed to the institutional development of sociology as a science. Prosocial behavior serves as the basis of social order, or moral order (Rawls, 2010), social solidarity development, and social justice promotion in (post)modern social systems. It is also important to analyze the subjective perceptions, altruistic intentions, and actions of the representatives of different social groups, including young people, which gives altruistic acts new meaning and substance.

The younger generation plays an important role in the social structure, reproducing social experience, performing the innovative function, and sharing renewed experiences with successive generations in the course of their activities (Chuprov, 1998). Young people drive change and progress; they are a social resource that determines future societal development. The social potential of young people as innovators and social change drivers lies in the ability to perform socially significant functions in order to improve the social stability and sustainability of society. Therefore, it is relevant to examine altruism as perceived by young people, their readiness for altruistic acts, and actual prosocial practices from the historical and sociological perspectives.

In this study, we aim to conduct a historical and sociological analysis of the phenomenon of altruism and to study its perceptions held by the younger generation, as well as their prosocial attitudes and practices.

Historical and Sociological Interpretation of the Phenomenon of Altruism***Classical Sociology***

The concept of “altruism” was introduced into scientific discourse by Auguste Comte, who understood it to mean the implementation of the “live for others” principle. Proceeding from this, the founder of sociology stated the following: (a) the new

philosophy encourages all things to be viewed from the moral rather than the intellectual perspective; (b) the positive science “teaches us that individual happiness and public welfare are far more dependent upon the heart than upon the intellect” (Comte, 1875); (c) to establish a permanent harmony between various motives is possible only by giving absolute preference to the feeling that evokes a sincere and habitual desire to do good; it should be borne in mind that benevolent emotions generally carry lower inner energy than selfish emotions; (d) the positive science naturally turns into the Religion of Humanity; (e) “identifying happiness and duty, positive religion places them once and for all in moral improvement, the exclusive source of true unity” (Comte, 1877); (f) this will help to restore the broken link between the world of the living and the dead and to strengthen the social order; (g) the implementation of his doctrine through social policy measures is designed to ensure the harmonious existence of all people.

Auguste Comte interpreted positivism as a synthesis of science, Religion of Humanity, and social policy, through which society could overcome the crisis and take the path of progress, emphasizing that the humanistic essence of positivism “is to make our sympathetic instincts preponderate as far as possible over the selfish instincts; social feelings over personal feelings” (Comte, 1875). In his understanding, altruism was associated with the principles of solidarity and social justice.

From the standpoint of utilitarian ethics, fruitful research on altruism was conducted by Herbert Spencer (1879). Defining “altruism as being all action which, in the normal course of things, benefits others instead of benefiting self,” he rightly pointed out the close relationship between egoism and altruism: “The adequately egoistic individual retains those powers which make altruistic activities possible. The individual who is inadequately egoistic loses more or less of his ability to be altruistic.” However, the scientist noted that “undue altruism increases egoism; both directly in contemporaries and indirectly in posterity” (Spencer, 1879).

According to Herbert Spencer (1892), altruism can be unconscious and conscious, physical and automatically-psychical; however, regardless of its nature, it includes all actions through which the life of offsprings and the species is preserved. Herbert Spencer believed that

comparisons of the altruistic sentiments resulting from sympathy, as exhibited in different types of men and different social states, may be conveniently arranged under three heads—(a) Pity, which should be observed as displayed towards offspring, towards the sick and aged, and towards enemies. (b) Generosity (duly discriminated from the love of display) ... The manifestations of this sentiment, too, are to be noted in respect of their range ... (c) Justice. (Spencer, 1892, p. 368)

Distinguishing between negative altruism (“curbing of the egoistic impulses”) and positive altruism (i.e., making efforts to benefit others leads to the well-being of our fellow human beings), Spencer paid considerable attention to “secondary” altruism, that is beneficence. The negative variants included the restrictions on freedom of competition and contract, undeserved rewards, displays of superiority, expression of disapproval and approval, and various sanctions; the positive variants included

marital, parental, filial, public, and political beneficence; assistance to the sick, accident victims, the unfortunate, those in danger, and the poor.

As a liberal, Spencer supported private beneficence, while advocating against state beneficence, which breeds bureaucracy and dependency. He was convinced that aid should not be given to “vicious” people, “good-for-nothings, who ... live on the good-for-somethings: vagrants and sots, criminals and those on the way to crime, youths who are burdens on hard-worked parents, men who appropriate the wages of their wives, fellows who share the gains of prostitutes,” etc. (Spencer, 1884/1981). We can agree with his conclusion that the transformation of human nature from egoistic to altruistic is a long process and will take ages.

Some views of Spencer were criticized by his contemporaries. For example, Russian anarchist Pyotr Kropotkin believed that the ethical progress of a person was primarily determined by mutual help rather than mutual struggle (Kropotkin, 1921/1979). As a sociologist, Kropotkin ranged himself on the side of eudemonists or hedonists and did not offer an explanation as to why a man considers his greatest pleasure in a kind of life which we call moral. The researcher refuted Spencer’s statement (“egoistic claims must take precedence of altruistic claims”) pointing out that “the modern development of society tends toward enabling each one of us to enjoy not only personal benefits, but to a much greater extent, social benefits” (Kropotkin, 1921/1979). As an example, the Russian sociologist cited tens of thousands of European associations, societies, fraternities, unions, and institutions that represent “an immense amount of voluntary, unambitious, and unpaid or underpaid work—what are they but so many manifestations, under an infinite variety of aspects, of the same ever-living tendency of man towards mutual aid and support” (Kropotkin, 1908).

As a result of the discussions, the role of egoism and altruism in the motivation of a person’s behavior became relevant in social research. For example, according to Émile Durkheim (1897/2002), the word “altruism” expresses the state where “ego is not its own property,” where it merges with something other than itself, and where the focus of activity is exterior to itself, but within the group to which the individual belongs. Proceeding from this, he first analyzed the phenomenon of altruistic suicide committed as a result of an underdeveloped individuality and submission of the individual to a group and the society as a whole. The existence of this type of suicide is evidenced by the following cases in history: (a) suicides of the elderly and sick; (b) suicide of wives after the death of their husbands; (c) suicides of slaves, servants, etc., after the death of their master or chief (Durkheim, 1897/2002). Reflecting on the commonness of altruistic suicide in the military, the French sociologist gave a clear warning: “Where altruistic suicide is prevalent, man is always ready to give his life; however, at the same time, he sets no more value on that of another” (Durkheim, 1897/2002).

The conclusion of Durkheim that “social solidarity is a wholly moral phenomenon which by itself is not amenable to exact observation and especially not to measurement” (1893/2013; p. 52) is still valid. In real life, special forms of solidarity can be distinguished: professional, domestic, national, present-day, that of the past, etc., each of which has its own nature. It is true solidarity that can prevent the negative manifestations of altruism.

Rejecting Durkheim's "anti-psychologism," Georg Simmel, one of the founders of formal sociology, argued that it is wrong to divide individual actions into egoistic and altruistic since these behaviors go hand in hand (Simmel, 1892). He believes there to be an inextricable mixture of selfishness and altruism along with ambition and concern in the universal human endeavor to impose our opinions about what is theoretically and practically right on everyone else and to shape their lives accordingly. The German researcher attributed this to the fact that as altruism (which prevents egoism) increases, it becomes a psychological end in itself for the individual.

Georg Simmel convincingly showed the dialectics of subjective assessment of this phenomenon: the same action can be both selfish and altruistic, depending on the views of a person. For example, if an individual, selflessly taking care of their family, uses means that harm third parties, this behavior is altruistic only from the individual's point of view; the wider social circles consider it to be selfish since, in relation to them, the individual and their family are a single subject (Simmel, 1892).

Neoclassical Sociology

In neoclassical sociology, an original concept of altruism was proposed by Pitirim Sorokin. Researchers note that his views were affected by Christianity and the teachings of Leo Tolstoy (Krotov & Dolgov, 2011; Lomonosova & Egoshina, 2019); as well as Georg Simmel, he gave special attention to the psychological component of the phenomenon. In his view, depending on various combinations of emotional, volitional, and intellectual elements, altruistic love, in terms of its psychological characterization, is distinguished by "tones" or "colors": compassion, sympathy, kindness, friendship, loyalty, reverence, benevolence, admiration, respect, etc.

The researcher believed that all true altruistic experiences and acts exhibit two common characteristics (Sorokin, 1964):

- the ego or "I" of a loving individual seeks to merge and identify with the beloved "You";
- all beloved individuals are viewed and perceived as the ultimate value. If altruistic love remains at the level of purely psychological experience and does not manifest itself in obvious altruistic actions, it is "hypocritical altruism".

Having studied the altruization of the great apostles of selfless love, the sociologist identified three types of altruists: (a) "fortunate" who are humble from early childhood and focused entirely on love, superior self, or God; (b) "catastrophic," whose personalities were dramatically transformed by an illness, death of a loved one, etc. and "late," who internalized new values; (c) the intermediate type exhibits some of the characteristics of the "fortunate" and "late-catastrophic" types (Sorokin, 1964). Historical examples show that, as a rule, the altruization of an individual is possible only through the altruization of their group or institutions.

As the head of the Harvard Research Center in Creative Altruism, Pitirim Sorokin (1964) conducted a series of experiments that allowed him to develop five dimensions of altruistic love (Table 1).

Table 1
Dimensions of Altruistic Love (According to Pitirim Sorokin)

Dimension	Range
Intensity	From zero to infinity, from a rich man giving a few cents to a starving man to a voluntary sacrifice of “body and soul” for the well-being of a loved one
Extensity	From the zero point of self-love (egotism) to the love of all mankind
Duration	From the briefest possible moment to several decades, often the whole life of an individual or a group
Purity	From pure love of a human being to the “soiled love” driven by selfish motives of adventure, utility, and pleasure
Adequacy	From “blind” to “wise”

Note. Source: Sorokin (1964).

The research of Pitirim Sorokin on the subject of altruism has been repeatedly criticized in the scientific literature. For example, Lewis Coser (2003) hesitated “to say much about the value of the inquiries of the Center,” while Andrey Bykov (2015) believes that Sorokin’s studies of altruism have contributed little to advancing the scientific explanation of this phenomenon. However, we argue that they underestimate the contribution of Sorokin to the study of altruism. His statement that “the altruistic transformation of man and man’s universe is the paramount item on today’s agenda of history” (Sorokin, 1964) is relevant and has set a vector for the continued development of sociology in this direction. For example, Alexander Dolgov (2014) characterized specific techniques of altruization proposed by Pitirim Sorokin.

A different (structural-functional) approach was developed by Robert Merton, who defined institutional altruism as a special form of altruism in which structural regulation, specifically the distribution of rewards and punishments, promotes behavior that is useful for others (Rubtsova & Martianova, 2012). Having examined the issue of institutional altruism in professions, the American sociologist concluded that the reward structure in the professional community promotes the professional’s interest in placing the client’s well-being above the standard required by the profession (Merton, 1982). Thus, institutional altruism is focused on action alternatives through which the social structure increases the likelihood of people choosing altruistic actions over all other possible options.

A representative of the neo-institutional approach, Kieran Healy, convincingly proved that the organizational and institutional environment can structure and develop the basic capacity for altruistic acts in modern society. He identified three types of logistical effectiveness: (a) resources, i.e., larger organizations that have better funding and/or staffing have more opportunities to provide charitable services; (b) scope, i.e., organizations represented in many locations are more likely to find potential donors; (c) persistence, i.e., consistent actions taken by organizations enable greater success in procuring donors (Healy, 2004).

Postclassical and Nonclassical Sociology: Approaches to the Study of Altruism

In postclassical sociology, assistance is understood primarily as a contribution to the fulfillment of another person's needs. Niklas Luhmann (1975) showed that, although archaic symbiotic relationships and morally generalized forms of assistance still exist, the main focus of social assistance today is on decision-making programs, that is, on the rules by which the accuracy of decisions is assessed.

This fact can be attributed to the nature of modern society: many functions that used to be performed at the level of the whole society are transferred to organizations (due to the advantages associated with the functional division and specialization of services). To the extent that the institutional environment defines the horizons of possibility, its characteristics become the basis for life experience and action. Within this framework, the decision to help or not to help is no longer a matter of cordiality, reciprocity, or morality, but a matter of procedural training and interpretation of the program that is implemented by professionals in a limited working time. The list of problems to which the organization is guaranteed to respond is prepared by its own structures.

The organized efforts to eliminate problem cases supplant other motives for helping because they are characterized by greater effectiveness and capability to regulate workload distribution. Niklas Luhmann points out the danger in this since not every problem can be solved by organizing social work. It is clear that direct assistance is also possible and makes sense. The society recognizes, including normatively, the freedom of individual decision-making (Luhmann, 1975, pp. 134–149).

Nonclassical sociology offers a variety of approaches. From a sociobiological perspective, altruism involving self-sacrifice arises from the need to pass on the best set of genes shared by several individuals to the next generation. Behaviorists argue that altruism is not a behavioral feature: it is based entirely on the intentions behind the action (Rushton, 1982).

From the perspective of the social exchange theory, the altruist providing assistance to another is in a dominant position, whereas the person receiving it has a subordinate role. Equity may become part of the context since the target of the altruism seeks to restore balance. Although altruistic actions may not lead to immediate reward from the "rewarder," the reward may be delayed or vicarious (Honeycutt, 1981).

Jennifer Carrera et al. (2018) proposed the concept of banal altruism aimed at addressing mundane tasks. It is characterized by the use of mundane, most common practices to make a positive contribution to societal development. As a special type of banal altruism, they identify research altruism, which is inherent in people who participate in scientific projects that promote public benefit. They see it as part of civic engagement. Noteworthy is that some differences were reported in how participants characterized their motivation, depending on whether they associated it with a sense of connection to common humanity, to science, or to community organization (Carrera et al., 2018).

Brent Simpson and Robb Willer (2015), while pointing to the crucial role of such social mechanisms as rules, reputation, and relations in creating and maintaining a high level of cooperation in social groups, emphasize the duality inherent in these factors.

They encourage less altruistic people to behave the way more altruistic individuals do while hiding their true motives. Since they deprive individuals of their ability to critically assess their own character and the character of other individuals, intrinsic motivation and trust often diminish, even with increased cooperation. Thus, social mechanisms offer group members to adhere to a sort of social contract, which comes at a certain cost, but in exchange provides the benefits of efficient and productive group living (Simpson & Willer, 2015).

In general, foreign researchers are convinced that the sociology of altruism and social solidarity has been institutionalized within sociology. In the broadest sense, this field of knowledge focuses on those aspects of the individual, society, and culture that benefit individuals and enrich social life. It is concerned with systematically studying these phenomena in interpersonal, intergroup, and international relations (Jeffries et al., 2006). An analysis of the concepts and approaches presented above leads us to a sociological understanding of altruism as a set of actions of individuals and interaction between them and groups intended to benefit another person, allowing us to classify the types of altruism (Table 2).

Table 2
Classification of Altruism

Classification Criterion	Types
Subject	Personal and group
Object	Different sociodemographic groups (men/women; children/youth/middle-aged people/aged people)
Consciousness	Unconscious and conscious
Nature	True (pure), hedonistic, emotional, and false (“hypocritical”)
Direction	Kin and reciprocal
Scope	Universal, local, and targeted
Specific nature of manifestation	Spontaneous and regular
Duration	Short-term, medium-term, and long-term
Frequency	Occasional, periodic, and constant
Degree of overtness	Public, semi-public, and latent
Institutionality	Institutional and non-institutional
Compliance with requirements	Mandatory, recommended, permissible, and approved
Intensity of altruism	Intense, normal, and weak
Effectiveness	Highly effective, effective, and ineffective
Result	Positive and negative

Altruism of the Younger Generation as a Sociological Problem

The younger generation is a resource-rich social group that should be the driving force behind economic, demographic, professional, and cultural breakthroughs in societal development. Young people exhibit agency in their lives (Zubok & Chuprov, 2019), which indicates the altruistic potential of the younger generation and its readiness to embrace, adopt, and reproduce prosocial practices in the future. We consider the altruistic behavior of the younger generation to be a manifestation of agency: helping behavior becomes a factor in self-determination and, according to Henri Tajfel and John Turner (1979), social identification. Ngai Pun et al. (2023) found that the prosocial activities of working-class students can help build and maintain social solidarity.

A wide range of modern research on altruism suggests that prosocial behavior among youth has a positive effect on their well-being (Rosli & Perveen, 2021) and helps develop social ties (Aknin et al., 2013), as well as fostering civic-mindedness (Gogleva, 2024) and social competence (Penner et al., 2005). Having analyzed scientific publications on volunteer activities, Ching Man Lam (2012) concluded that volunteers are less prone to depression than non-participants in prosocial activities; they tend to experience greater happiness, have high life satisfaction and self-esteem, and are better adjusted to life.

Studies show that certain personality traits contribute to altruism: abilities to empathize (Silke et al., 2018), assume the viewpoint of another (Batson et al., 1991), and assume responsibility (Tam & Yeung, 1999). In a survey of students, Maria Nedoshivina and Anatolii Svetsitskiy found that altruists perform selfless acts to benefit others, as well as striving to be useful and necessary (Nedoshivina & Svetsitskiy, 2014). In a study of students, Livia Yuliawati discovered that the “eudaimonic motive of wellbeing serves as a positive predictor of anonymous prosocial behavior” (i.e., without seeking recognition), while “the extrinsic motive for wellbeing emerges as a positive predictor of engaging in public prosocial behavior” (Yuliawati, 2024). Also, Carol Marchel found that motivation behind the altruistic behavior of the younger generation develops stepwise: a transition from reciprocal (receiving help from another person in the future) to true (lack of expectations from another) altruism (Marchel, 2003). We believe that along with the need to selflessly help people, youth also have egoistic motives behind their altruistic behavior, i.e., the importance of external evaluation, the desire to appear socially desirable, and the need to develop social contacts. In general, researchers indicate the importance of promoting altruistic behavior among youth (Bartolo et al., 2023) since their prosocial orientations are crucial to well-being both at the societal and individual levels (Dickey et al., 2020).

This study aims to examine perceptions held by youth regarding altruism and their orientation toward helping behavior in everyday life, drawing on the ideas of both classic sociologists and modern researchers. This idea seems promising since it allows the sociological concepts of altruism to be updated and contributes to the development of modern sociological science.

Methods

This empirical sociological study was conducted among the students of the Ural Federal University in April 2024. The research objectives were as follows: first, to determine what the younger generation understands by altruism; second, to ascertain whether young people perform altruistic acts in their everyday practice and perceive them as altruistic; third, to find out whether young people are ready for different types of altruistic behavior.

A total of 34 semi-structured interviews were conducted. The interview guide comprised ten questions (five open-ended questions and five closed-ended questions). In the questionnaire, we offered informants four projective situations (vignette method: Kalinin, 2022; Puzanova & Tertyshnikova, 2016) designed to determine the readiness of interviewees to act altruistically. The situations were designed to identify the predominant type of altruistic practice that might be of interest to young people. All vignettes measured conscious, local, short-term, approved/permissible, and effective types of altruism with a positive outcome. The main characteristics of the vignettes are as follows. The first vignette describes a situation of helping a close relative, which corresponds to personal, kin, and non-institutional altruism; this vignette was given the conventional name “Relative.” The second situation (“Charitable foundation”) is aimed at measuring personal, reciprocal, public, and institutional altruism, which is expressed through financial assistance to a charitable foundation followed by a public demonstration of the altruistic act by the subject. The third vignette, conventionally called “The elderly,” attempts to identify informants’ orientation toward true, group, public, and non-institutional altruism when fulfilling the role of a volunteer caregiver for the aged and elderly as the target of altruism. The fourth vignette (“Girl”) reveals a group, emotional, public, and institutional type of altruism toward a child: a situation is described to informants where they need to help find a little girl lost in the woods. In assessing readiness to engage in altruistic practices, a scale from 1 to 10 was proposed (where 1 = *not ready to act altruistically*, 10 = *maximally ready to act altruistically*).

On average, interviews lasted 25 minutes. The selection of informants took into account gender (the participants included 18 young women and 16 young men) and age (the average age of informants was 20.2 years). The informants were interviewed in their free time. After transcribing the interview materials, the obtained texts were summarized and grouped according to the research objectives.

The obtained materials are not representative, and the data cannot be extended to all Russian youth; they may also be inconsistent with the research data of sociologists who focused on the altruistic behavior of the younger generation from other countries. This study is exploratory in nature and provides a preliminary assessment of the social potential of Russian youth on the example of students studying at the Ural Federal University located in the central part of Eurasia.

Results and Discussion

Youth Perceptions of Altruism as a Social Phenomenon

In the social perceptions of young people, altruism is an activity that is intended to benefit another. According to the informants, altruistic behavior implies help that a person selflessly provides to someone in need: "Altruism is free, selfless, and gratuitous assistance (with money/things/services), which one person provides to another" (Female, 20 years old; Trans. by Natalia Popova—N. P.). The essential characteristic of altruism is mutual support, which, as noted by a Russian researcher Kropotkin, is rooted in human needs. The respondents note that it is in human nature to help each other, as well as to compete: "Altruism is about mutual help: if I help someone today, someone will help me tomorrow" (Female, 19 years old; Trans. by N. P.); "it is certainly in human nature to compete with each other, but it is also in our nature, on a genetic level, to help and be ready to sacrifice" (Female, 18 years old; Trans. by N. P.).

The study revealed that the informants perceive an altruistic personality as a set of personality traits that characterize prosocial behavior aimed at helping others (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Word Cloud Presenting Altruistic Personality Traits According Young People



Note. Prepared by the authors based on the respondents' answers using open software <https://www.wordclouds.com/>

According to the findings, the traits of an altruist, as perceived by the students, are as follows. An altruist is a person who can be described as being:

- selfless, i.e., “not seeking personal gain” (Male, 19 years old; Trans. by N. P.);
- responsive, i.e., “helping others is not something responsive people have to do, but something they want to do” (Female, 21 years old; Trans. by N. P.);
- mobile, i.e., a person “that can easily drop everything and do something necessary and important for someone else” (Female, 22 years old; Trans. by N. P.);
- caring, i.e., showing “concern for the people around them” (Female, 19 years old; Trans. by N. P.);
- well-bred, i.e., “people are taught from childhood to help those in need; it is a particular worldview” (Male, 18 years old; Trans. by N. P.);
- kind, as “only kind people seek to do good to others” (Female, 18 years old; Trans. by N. P.);
- ready to sacrifice their resources for the sake of another, i.e., demonstrating “willingness to sacrifice as the ability to do something, even if they have to spend time or money that they need” (Male, 19 years old; Trans. by N. P.);
- life-loving, since “those who love life the most help others” (Female, 21 years old; Trans. by N. P.);
- goal-oriented, as “persistent and goal-oriented people do not ignore those who need help” (Male, 19 years old; Trans. by N. P.);
- happy, since “those who help others are happy, and vice versa, those who are happy help others” (Female, 22 years old; Trans. by N. P.);
- self-reliant, i.e., “resolute, proactive, and self-reliant” (Male, 19 years old; Trans. by N. P.);
- considerate, meaning that “a considerate person shows empathy and compassion and knows how to sympathize” (Female, 20 years old; Trans. by N. P.).

In several cases, the informants used words reinforcing altruistic traits: “very kind/very well-bred,” “highly unselfish,” and “largely self-reliant.” A wide range of descriptions of the altruist was given by informants through the definition of altruistic behavior: from the clichéd phrase “helping people” (10 statements) to the key idea of prosocial practice, that is self-sacrifice to benefit someone or to save something (three statements).

Do the interviewees describe themselves as altruistic? Two-thirds of respondents are sure that they are altruists, explaining their help to others by the desire to support/help/show concern: “I don’t think about getting something in return for helping someone. I like to help others. I feel happier” (Female, 19 years old; Trans. by N. P.). Marina Butovskaya et al. (2021) note that happy people feel the desire to do good to others or, conversely, altruistic acts and empathy trigger positive emotions and a feeling of joy. The authors believe that this phenomenon can be attributed to the correlation between empathy and the level of oxytocin, which increases the feeling of happiness.

The informants use the golden rule of morality, that is “treat others as you would like to be treated” (Female, 21 years old; Trans. by N. P.), to define themselves as altruists. Noteworthy is that the golden rule shapes the behavior and values-

based attitude of a person toward other people in the context of ever-changing life circumstances, establishing the individual as a responsible social actor, who maintains a moral compass. The reference to the golden rule indicates that the younger generation embraces moral values in their lives: "There's nothing unusual; it's an informal rule to help someone who is in need. I'd say that it's everyone's responsibility" (Male, 22 years old; Trans. by N. P.).

The informants also raised issues considered by Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer, specifically, the consideration of the phenomenon of altruism from the perspective of social solidarity and justice: "I have always helped the vulnerable (elderly women and small children); we need to support each other as it makes us stronger" (Female, 21 years old; Trans. by N. P.); "I believe it is right and fair to help those in need ... if we choose not to overlook the misfortune of the individual, we will become better people, and the world will become a better place" (Male, 19 years old; Trans. by N. P.). According to modern studies, individuals are more prosocial toward poor than wealthy help recipients, believing this behavior to be fair (van Doesum et al., 2017).

The third part of the respondents expressed a selfish attitude; these respondents can be divided into three groups. In the first group, their attitude is associated with the demonstration of self-love, i.e., with the highest degree of egocentrism: "not interested in other people's problems" (Female, 18 years old; Trans. by N. P.); "I always put myself first" (Male, 20 years old; Trans. by N. P.); "not ready to give energy to other people" (Female, 21 years old; Trans. by N. P.); "act in my own interests. I want what's best for myself" (Female, 18 years old; Trans. by N. P.). In this case, the informants perceive themselves to be of special value. As a result, while pursuing their own interests, a self-centered person stops noticing the problems of others and feeling other people's pain and stops at nothing to achieve their goals (Ivanova & Smirnova, 2019).

The absence of altruistic attitudes in the second group, the informants explain by rationalized thinking: "I reflect on my actions" (Female, 19 years old; Trans. by N. P.); "I only do what makes sense to me. I try to take a calculated approach" (Male, 21 years old; Trans. by N. P.). Drawing on the ideas of Herbert Simon (1978), it can be argued that the "utility function" serves as a benchmark in life for some young people, which means that they refrain from altruistic acts if their potential rational utility is reduced to zero.

The egoistic orientation in the actions of the third group is associated with the negative experience of interaction with people, as well as with fears and risks involved in interacting with other people: "People are mean and petty; they have no desire to help" (Female, 19 years old; Trans. by N. P.); "I would probably be willing to do some good deeds if it were not for the possibility of dealing with aggression or hostility: those who are in need do not expect selfless acts" (Male, 20 years old; Trans. by N. P.). According to the VCIOM (Russian Public Opinion Research Center), 81% of Russians experience feelings of rage and strong anger at various intervals: every fifth person (20%) has such feelings weekly (every day or several times a week). Over a third of Russians who experience rage (38%) reported feeling anger toward other people due to their lack of good manners, insolence, inflated self-esteem, violation of boundaries, imposition of opinions, stupidity, rudeness, disrespect, lies, and hypocrisy (Upravlenie

Gnevom, 2023). Regarding fear, according to our research, 80% of young people believe that under the influence of fear, individuals become more aggressive, selfish, and mistrustful (Abramova et al., 2022).

In the study, three informants adopted an intermediate position, which was noted by Georg Simmel (1892): the same practice may be viewed as altruistic by some people, while others may view it as selfish. This is a position that primarily involves kin altruism, and nonrelatives may view the subject's actions as selfish: "I consider myself an altruist, but only in relation to my relatives. I am not ready to make sacrifices for others" (Female, 20 years old; Trans. by N. P.); "I can be selfish or altruistic, but I am certainly altruistic when it comes to my relatives" (Female, 21 years old; Trans. by N. P.).

In defining his position, one of the informants addressed the issue of love manifestation: "I am ready to give anything for the happiness of a loved one, but when it comes to others, it depends on a lot of things" (Male, 20 years old; Trans. by N. P.). This refers to love for a particular person and unselfish actions solely toward the object of sympathy. The expression of love for all humanity as a means of reducing aggression and achieving social order in the context of Sorokin's ideas is rather an ideal model of the future: "It seems to me that altruism toward all people cannot be achieved right now; it is impossible for everyone to love and care for all people" (Female, 19 years old; Trans. by N. P.).

Altruistic Practices of Young People

To what extent are survey participants engaged in actual altruistic practices? They were given lists of actions involving selfless assistance. Altruistic actions are performed to help primarily the older generation (aged and elderly people) who need assistance in getting from one place to another (for example, the informants actively described their experience in helping people who needed to cross the road). The respondents noted that they were moved by compassion:

On my way to the university, I saw an elderly woman at the crossroads, who was slowly crossing the road; the traffic light was already blinking. I felt very sorry for her, so I raised my hand to keep cars from driving and helped her across the road. (Female, 20 years old; Trans. by N. P.)

According to Xiaomin Liu et al. (2023), the greater the intensity of empathy, sympathy, and compassion, the stronger the altruistic motivation and the more likely individuals are to engage in helping behavior.

Compassion, magnanimity, and generosity, which were mentioned by the classics of sociology when characterizing the phenomenon of altruism, manifest themselves in financial assistance to the aged. One informant reported assisting an elderly person at a store by paying for her purchases and walking her home:

An elderly woman, probably in her 80s, was buying milk, sour cream, and bread at a small store located on the first floor of a residential building. I felt so sorry for her; she had a stick and a backpack, and I could tell she was having a hard time.

I decided to buy her this food; after all, it cost very little. Then I walked her home; it turned out that she lived in the same building. (Male, 22 years old; Trans. by N. P.)

According to Elena Shmeleva et al. (2021), the older generation is an attractive target for the altruistic activities of teachers in training: 41% of respondents are ready to help aged people, and the same proportion of respondents would like to help veterans. Noteworthy is that most actively students participate in the organization of cultural and sporting events (36%).

Almost all informants noted that they provided assistance to strangers on the street who needed help navigating a city. Also, the objects of altruistic actions were neighbors who asked for help during their vacation (to look after pets/water the plants) and for whom the respondents held the elevator/entrance doors.

Routine altruistic practices that demonstrate the social and moral potential of the younger generation include selfless assistance to classmates/coursemates in solving education-related issues (doing homework, studying a topic, etc.); in addition, students noted that they offer their seats in transport and let people jump the queue.

According to Jennifer Carrera and her colleagues (2018), the specified practices can be viewed as banal altruism, i.e., as routine actions of the informants in everyday life. They regard such altruistic acts as normal and unconscious: "I don't stop to think that I should offer my seat to an elderly person or hold the elevator door open: it's natural for any well-bred person" (Male, 20 years old; Trans. by N. P.).

Two-thirds of respondents admitted that they gave money to a stranger, while only one-third of respondents gave money to charity. One of the informants described her altruistic act as follows:

At the subway station, a girl approached me and said that she had forgotten her purse and phone at home and was late for an important meeting. She asked me to buy her a ticket. I happened to have cash on me, so I gave her a hundred rubles. She asked for my phone number so she could transfer the money to me in the evening. To be honest, I didn't expect to get the hundred rubles back. I just wanted to help her at that moment. But she kept her word, thanked me, and paid me back. (Female, 20 years old; Trans. by N. P.)

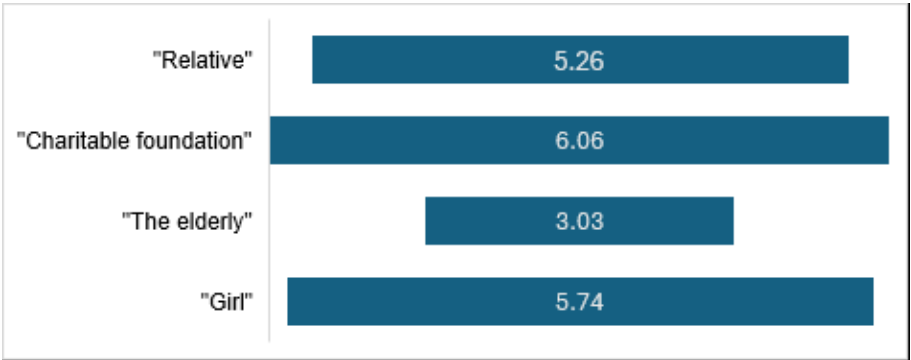
With respect to charity, the informants note that altruism is primarily targeted: "Altruism means helping a particular person. As for giving money to charity, I don't know how the money will be spent. I'd rather buy food for some elderly woman" (Female, 21 years old; Trans. by N. P.). The respondents are ready for collective practices of altruism: "I know that they raise money at the university. I haven't donated yet, but my friend told me about it" (Female, 19 years old; Trans. by N. P.). According to the informants, social networks have a high mobilization potential, uniting like-minded people to provide targeted assistance: "Money was raised for New Year presents for orphans via a VK¹ group, and then photos related to the charitable work were posted"

¹ VK (short for its original name VKontakte) is a Russian online social media and social networking service. <https://vk.com> VK™ is a trademark of VK.com Ltd.

(Female, 20 years old; Trans. by N. P.). Collective altruism builds a spirit of solidarity that manifests itself in cooperative prosocial activity focused on doing good for others. Such practices of engagement in collective altruistic behavior promote group identity and integration through the establishment of social ties and relationships, as well as creating an environment of people confident in themselves and in each other who are able to support and help in any difficult life situation (Anosov, 2022). According to Pitirim Sorokin (1964), the altruization of an individual is possible only through the altruization of their group or institutions; thus, it can be argued that engagement in collective altruistic practices and self-identification with altruists sets the vector of the further altruization of society.

An analysis of projective situations (vignettes) shows that the younger generation is primarily interested in personal, reciprocal, public, and institutional altruism: the “Charitable foundation” vignette scored highest (Figure 2). Noteworthy is that the modern world is witnessing a change in the value system: the consumer society is transforming into a “society of impressions,” in which the experiences of individuals, their sensory and emotional expectations become the driving force behind social activities. In this case, the description of a new experience and public demonstration of actions, as well as their recognition by reference groups/audience, determines the desire to engage in a particular activity. As noted by Amina Agrba, people of the post-pandemic period have increased needs to get new impressions and such value-laden concepts as mercy, compassion, and altruism become more relevant (Agrba, 2023). Next, in descending order, follow the situations “Girl” (group, emotional, public, and institutional) and “Relative” (personal, kin, and non-institutional). The findings showed that young people are virtually unprepared to provide care for the aged and elderly, which indicates that true altruism is viewed by the informants more as social heroism: “I am not ready to provide care for the aged; it is very hard both physically and emotionally; few people are able to do that...” (Female, 19 years old; Trans. by N. P.).

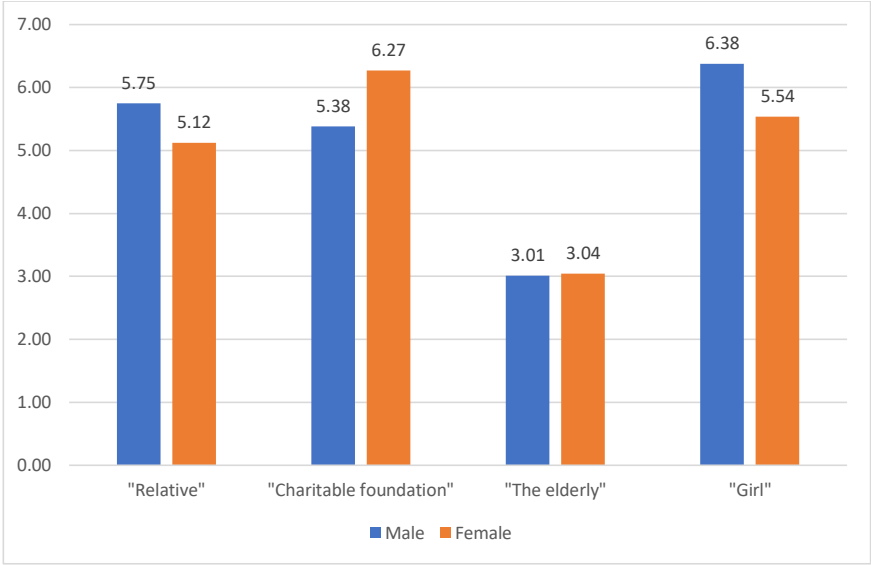
Figure 2
Readiness of Young People for an Altruistic Act



Note. The index ranges from 1 to 10. A higher index value indicates greater readiness of the informant to engage in an altruistic act. Source: developed by the authors.

A comparative analysis of responses given by young men and women revealed differences in what altruistic act they would choose to perform (Figure 3): men are more willing to help search for a little girl, as well as to assist a relative, than women. However, studies on altruism show that women tend to engage in prosocial behavior more often than men, which can be attributed to the specifics of gender socialization and the adoption of a social role that requires them to take care of others, which is characteristic of the female community (Pastor et al., 2024).

Figure 3
Readiness of Young People for an Altruistic Act Depending on Gender



Note. The index ranges from 1 to 10. A higher index value indicates greater readiness of the informant to engage in an altruistic act. Source: developed by the authors.

Thus, the analysis of vignettes shows that the younger generation is generally oriented toward personal, reciprocal, public, and non-institutional altruism, with young men being more emotionally affected than young women and kinship ties being stronger for them. This study partially confirms the conclusion reached by Maria Pevnaya et al. (2022): the proportion of young people who consciously refuse to volunteer or doubt that they will volunteer in the future is increasing. Individual practices of altruism are replacing institutionally organized and established altruistic practices; this transformation is also noted by other researchers (Kicherova et al., 2023).

Conclusion

The materials of the conducted study allowed us to draw the following conclusions. The historical and sociological analysis of the phenomenon of altruism revealed that it is generally interpreted as a set of actions and interactions between individuals

and groups intended to benefit another. The younger generation associates altruism with prosocial behavior aimed at helping others. As perceived by young people, an altruist is, first of all, a selfless, responsive, mobile, caring, well-bred, and kind person. Youth who regard themselves as a generation of altruists embrace the golden rule of morality, believing that altruistic acts promote social solidarity and social justice. It is common for young people to practice banal altruism, which is a routine practice in everyday life. Egoistic orientations can be attributed to the egocentric attitudes of a small proportion of young people, as well as rationalized thinking, fear, and negative experiences of prosocial actions.

The study revealed the following contradictions in the altruistic actions of young people and their readiness for prosocial activity. First, young people who exhibit compassion, magnanimity, and generosity act selflessly toward the aged and elderly; however, they are not ready to take care of them. Second, for young people, real prosocial activity involves providing direct targeted assistance to a particular person, i.e., it is non-institutional in nature; however, in a projective situation, informants would prefer to use institutional structures (charitable foundations) in order to make a public record of selfless acts. Third, gratuitous assistance to relatives, which is perceived by young people as altruism and practiced in everyday life, is not realized in the projective situation: relatives are not the main object of informants' altruistic acts.

The representatives of the younger generation exhibited selectivity, indicating readiness for altruistic acts, focusing primarily on personal, reciprocal, public, and non-institutional altruism. In general, the study suggests that under modern conditions, young people view altruism as a form of local proactive normative behavior practiced primarily every day. This fact indicates the social potential of youth to reproduce social order and social sustainability since local/banal/everyday altruism is the basis for setting the vector of further societal development.

We believe that a promising direction for further altruism research would be to study the role of social media in shaping the altruistic attitudes of the younger generation, as well as to determine the effect of altruistic behavior on the social well-being of the population as a whole.

References

- Abramova, S., Antonova, N., Campa, R., & Popova, N. (2022). Digital fears experienced by young people in the age of technoscience. *Changing Societies & Personalities*, 6(1), 56–78. <https://doi.org/10.15826/csp.2022.6.1.163>
- Agrba, A. A. (2023). Ekonomika vpechatlenii v prizme kul'turno-tsennostnykh paradigm [The experience economy in the prism of cultural and value paradigms]. *Concept: Philosophy, Religion, Culture*, 7(4), 98–116. <https://doi.org/10.24833/2541-8831-2023-4-28-98-116>
- Aknin, L. B., Dunn, E. W., Sandstrom, G. M., & Norton, M. I. (2013). Does social connection turn good deeds into good feelings?: On the value of putting the 'social' in prosocial spending. *International Journal of Happiness and Development*, 1(2), 155–171. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJHD.2013.055643>

Anosov, S. S. (2022). Sotsial'naia solidarnost' i identichnost' volonterov obshchestvennykh organizatsii [Social solidarity and identity of volunteers of public organizations]. *Sotsiologiya*, 2, 101–108.

Bartolo, M. G., Palermi, A. L., Servidio, R., & Costabile, A. (2023). "I feel good, I am a part of the community": Social responsibility values and prosocial behaviors during adolescence, and their effects on well-being. *Sustainability*, 15(23), Article 16207. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su152316207>

Batson, C. D., Batson, J. G., Slingsby, J. K., Harrell, K. L., Peekna, H. M., & Todd, R. M. (1991). Empathic joy and the empathy-altruism hypothesis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 61(3), 413–426. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.61.3.413>

Butovskaya, M. L., Dronova, D. A., & Karelin, D. V. (2021). Delezh ogranichennymi resursami u detei i podrostkov okhotnikov-sobiratelei (khadza) i zemledel'tsev (iraku) v kontekste predstavlenii ob evoliutsionnykh osnovakh al'truizma u cheloveka [The sharing limited resources among children and adolescents of hunter-gatherers (Hadza) and farmers (Iraqw) in the context of ideas about the evolutionary foundations of altruism in humans]. *Stratum Plus*, 1, 17–37. <https://doi.org/10.55086/sp2111737>

Bykov, A. V. (2015). Poniatie "al'truizm" v sotsiologii: Ot klassicheskikh kontseptsii k prakticheskomu zabveniiu [The concept of "altruism" in sociology: From classical theories to practical oblivion]. *RUDN Journal of Sociology*, 1, 5–18.

Carrera, J. S., Brown, P., Brody, J. G., & Morello-Frosch, R. (2018). Research altruism as motivation for participation in community-centered environmental health research. *Social Science & Medicine*, 196, 175–181. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2017.11.028>

Chuprov, V. I. (1998). Molodezh' v obshchestvennom vosproizvodstve [Youth in social reproduction]. *Sotsiologicheskie Issledovaniya*, 3, 93–106.

Comte, A. (1875). *System of positive polity: Vol. 1. General view of positivism and introductory principles*. Longman, Green and Co. (Originally published in French 1851)

Comte, A. (1877). *System of positive polity: Vol. 4. Theory of the future of man*. Longman, Green and Co. (Originally published in French 1854)

Coser, L. A. (2003). *Masters of sociological thought: Ideas in historical and social context* (2nd ed.). Waveland Press.

Dickey, K. J., Alpizar, A. E. B., Irlbeck, E., & Burris, S. (2020). One seed at a time: Prosocial youth development in an urban agriculture program. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 61(1), 110–127. <https://doi.org/10.5032/jae.2020.01110>

Dolgov, A. Iu. (2014). Pitirim Sorokin o metodakh al'truizatsii lichnosti, obshchestva i kul'tury [Pitirim Sorokin on methods of altruization of personality, society and culture]. In D. V. Efremenko (Ed.), *Sotsial'naia solidarnost' i al'truizm: Sotsiologicheskaia traditsiia i sovremennye mezhdistitsiplinarnye issledovaniia* [Social solidarity and

altruism: Sociological tradition and modern interdisciplinary research] (pp. 205–221). INION RAN.

Durkheim, E. (2002). *Suicide: A study in sociology* (J. A. Spaulding & G. Simpson, Trans.). Routledge Classics. (Originally published in French 1897)

Gogleva, K. Yu. (2024). Vospitanie grazhdanstvennosti i patriotizma u molodogo pokoleniia kak faktor protivodeistviia ugroze rossiiskim dukhovno-nravstvennym traditsionnym tsennostiam [Education of civic consciousness and patriotism among the young generation as countermeasures to Russian moral traditional values threat]. *Bulletin of the Institute of Law of the Bashkir State University*, 4, 34–44. <https://doi.org/10.33184/vest-law-bsu-2024.24.3>

Healy, K. (2004). Altruism as an organizational problem: The case of organ procurement. *American Sociological Review*, 69(3), 387–404. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240406900304>

Honeycutt, J. M. (1981). Altruism and social exchange theory: The vicarious rewards of the altruist. *Mid-American Review of Sociology*, 6(1), 93–99. <https://doi.org/10.17161/STR.1808.4880>

Ivanova, A., & Smirnova, E. (2019). Egotsentrizm lichnosti kak problema XXI veka [Egocentrism of personality as a problem of the 21st century]. *Uchenye zapiski St. Petersburg University of Management Technologies and Economics*, 2, 46–51.

Jeffries, V., Johnston, B. V., Nichols, L. T., Oliner, S. P., Tiryakian, E., & Weinstein, J. (2006). Altruism and social solidarity: Envisioning a field of specialization. *The American Sociologist*, 37(3), 67–83. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12108-006-1023-7>

Kalinin, R. G. (2022). Metod vin'etok v onlain-issledovanii: Aprobatsiia instrumentariia dlia issledovaniia vospriiatiia spravedlivosti [Vignette method in online research: Measuring perceptions of fairness]. *Vestnik instituta sotziologii*, 13(3), 162–178. <https://doi.org/10.19181/vis.2022.13.3.836>

Kicherova, M. N., Yurina, E. A., & Karavaytseva, T. V. (2023). Volonterskaia deiatel'nost' molodezhi: Reprezentatsiia v sotsial'nykh setiakh [Youth volunteering: Representation in social media]. *Tyumen State University Herald. Social, Economic, and Law Research*, 9(1), 44–65. <https://doi.org/10.21684/2411-7897-2023-9-1-44-65>

Kropotkin, P. A. (1908). *Mutual aid: A factor of evolution*. W. Heinemann.

Kropotkin, P. A. (1979). *Ethics: Origin and development* (L. S. Friedland & J. R. Piroshnikoff, Trans.). Dial Press. (Originally published in Russian 1921)

Krotov, P. P., & Dolgov, A. Iu. (2011). *Ot voyny k miru: U istokov teorii sozidatel'nogo al'truizma Pitirima Sorokina* [From war to peace: At the origins of Pitirim Sorokin's theory of creative altruism]. Drevnosti Severa.

Lam, C. M. (2012). Prosocial involvement as a positive youth development construct: A conceptual review. *The Scientific World Journal*, 2012, Article 769158. <https://doi.org/10.1100/2012/769158>

Liu, X., Zhang, Y., Chen, Z., Xiang, G., Miao, H., & Guo, C. (2023). Effect of socioeconomic status on altruistic behavior in Chinese middle school students: Mediating role of empathy. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 20(4), Article 3326. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20043326>

Lomonosova, M. V., & Egoshina, N. A. (2019). Lev Tolstoi i Pitirim Sorokin: Estafeta al'truizma [Leo Tolstoy and Pitirim Sorokin: Relay race of altruism]. *Nasledie*, 2, 59–72. <https://doi.org/10.31119/hrtg.2019.2.4>

Luhmann, N. (1975). *Soziologische Aufklärung 2: Aufsätze zur Theorie der Gesellschaft* [Sociological enlightenment 2: Essays on the theory of society] (4th ed.). Westdeutscher. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-663-12374-3>

Marchel, C. A. (2003). The path to altruism in service-learning classes: Big steps or a different kind of awkwardness? *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 10(1), 15–27.

Merton, R. K. (1982). *Social research and the practicing professions* (A. Rosenblatt & T. F. Gieryn, Eds.). Abt Books.

Nedoshivina, M. A., & Svetsitskiy, A. L. (2014). Sotsial'nye predstavleniia molodezhi Sankt-Peterburga ob al'truizme [Social representations of altruism in young people in Saint Petersburg]. *Peterburgskii psikhologicheskii zhurnal*, 9, 97–118.

Pastor, Y., Pérez-Torres, V., Thomas-Currás, H., Lobato-Rincón, L. L., López-Sáez, M. Á., & García, A. (2024). A study of the influence of altruism, social responsibility, reciprocity, and the subjective norm on online prosocial behavior in adolescence. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 154, Article 108156. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2024.108156>

Penner, L. A., Dovidio, J. F., Piliavin, J. A., & Schroeder, D. A. (2005). Pro-social behavior: Multilevel perspectives. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 56, 365–392. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.56.091103.070141>

Pevnaya, M. V., Tarasova, A. N., Telepaeva, D. F., & Cernicova-Bucă, M. (2022). Volonterskaia deiatel'nost' uchashcheisia molodezhi: Sotsial'naia znachimost' i osnovaniia motivirovannogo otkaza [Volunteering of students: Social meaning and basis of motivated refusal]. *The Education and Science Journal*, 24(10), 200–230. <https://doi.org/10.17853/1994-5639-2022-10-200-230>

Pun, N., Hui, B. P. H., & Koo, A. (2023). Youth work, prosocial behaviour, and micro-foundation of working-class solidarity among vocational school students in China. *Journal of Education and Work*, 36(5), 393–407. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080.2023.2228721>

Puzanova, Z. V., & Tertyshnikova, A. G. (2016). Sposoby obrabotki dannykh, poluchennykh metodom vin'etok v sotsiologicheskikh issledovaniiax [Analysis of vignette method data in sociological research]. *RUDN Journal of Sociology*, 16(4), 742–754.

Rawls, A. W. (2010). Social order as moral order. In S. Hitlin & S. Vaisey (Eds.), *Handbook of the sociology of morality* (pp. 95–122). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-6896-8_6

Rosli, S. N., & Perveen, A. (2021). The relationship between prosocial behavior and psychological well-being among undergraduate students. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 11(6), 276–289. <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v11-i6/10119>

Rubtsova, M. V., & Martianova, N. A. (2012). Al'truizm v professional'noi praktike: Sotsiologicheskii analiz professii Roberta K. Mertona [Altruism in professional practice: A sociological analysis of the professions of Robert K. Merton]. *Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University. Series 12. Psychology. Sociology. Pedagogy*, 1, 152–158.

Rushton, J. P. (1982). Altruism and society: A social learning perspective. *Ethics*, 92(3), 425–446. <https://doi.org/10.1086/292353>

Shmeleva, E. A., Kislyakov, P. A., Starodubtseva, L. V., & Priyatkina, N. Iu. (2021). Prosotsial'naiia aktivnost' budushchikh pedagogov [Prosocial activity of future teachers]. *Vestnik of Minin University*, 9(4), Article 13. <https://doi.org/10.26795/2307-1281-2021-9-4-13>

Silke, C., Brady, B., Boylan, C., & Dolan, P. (2018). Factors influencing the development of empathy and pro-social behaviour among adolescents: A systematic review. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 94, 421–436. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2018.07.027>

Simmel, G. (1892). *Einleitung in die Moralwissenschaft: Eine Kritik der ethischen Grundbegriffe* [Introduction to moral science: A criticism of the basic ethical concepts] (Vol. 1). W. Hertz.

Simon, H. A. (1978). Rationality as process and as product of thought. *American Economic Review*, 68(2), 1–16.

Simpson, B., & Willer, R. (2015). Beyond altruism: Sociological foundations of cooperation and prosocial behavior. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 41, 43–63. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-073014-112242>

Sorokin, P. A. (1964). *The basic trends of our time*. College & University Press.

Spencer, H. (1879). *The data of ethics* (2nd ed.). Williams and Norgate.

Spencer, H. (1892). *Essays: Scientific, political and speculative* (Vol. 1). D. Appleton.

Spencer, H. (1981). *The man versus the state: With six essays on government, society, and freedom*. Liberty Classics. (Originally published 1884)

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33–48). Brooks-Cole.

Tam, T. S. K., & Yeung, S. (1999). Altruism, social responsibility, and government support for social welfare. *Asia Pacific Journal of Social Work and Development*, 9(2), 79–95. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21650993.1999.9756117>

Upravlenie gnevom [Anger management]. (2023, September 13). VCIOM (Russian Public Opinion Research Center). <https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/upravlenie-gnevom>

van Doesum, N. J., Tybur, J. M., & van Lange P. A. M. (2017). Class impressions: Higher social class elicits lower prosociality. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 68, 11–20. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2016.06.001>

Yuliawati, L. (2024). Unveiling the veil: Exploring how wellbeing motivations shape anonymous and public prosocial behavior in Indonesia. *BMC Psychology*, 12, Article 299. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-024-01799-2>

Zubok, Yu. A., & Chuprov, V. I. (2019). Samoregulatsiia smyslozhiznennykh tsennostei v kul'turnom prostranstve molodezhi [Self-regulation of life purpose values in youth cultural space]. *Bulletin of the Institute of Sociology*, 10(4), 164–186. <https://doi.org/10.19181/vis.2019.31.4.614>



ARTICLE

Strategies for Forming the Image of Islam/ Muslims in the Media Discourse

Tatyana S. Pronina, Varvara A. Slivkina

Pushkin Leningrad State University, Saint Petersburg, Russia

ABSTRACT

The article explores the process of constructing the image of Islam and Muslims in media discourse, focusing on publications from Saint Petersburg and the Leningrad Oblast (Russia) over the past two decades. The research employs the analytical reading of text data, following the grounded theory method. The focus is made on themes such as the European migration crisis and the rise of Islamic migration to Europe and Russia, debates over wearing the hijab in Russian schools, and coverage of Muslim religious holidays and ethnic festivals like Sabantuy. The study also addresses city incidents, events linked to extremist and terrorist activities, and the portrayal of Muslims in the context of Russia's demographic landscape. Additionally, it highlights how the Muslim community is represented within the framework of a multi-confessional and multi-ethnic urban environment. The analysis of the empirical material leads the authors to identify two primary strategies employed by local media in constructing the image of Islam and Muslims. These strategies reflect both challenges and opportunities for fostering understanding and cooperation within diverse societies. The authors conclude that promoting inclusion and ensuring a peaceful future require long-term efforts, including educational initiatives and consistent work to combat stereotypes and prejudice in media narratives.

KEYWORDS

image of Islam, image of Muslims, media discourse, grounded theory, migration, religion

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This work is supported by a grant Russian Science Foundation No 23-28-00374 “Religion as a factor of adaptation and integration of (im)migrants: on the example of the countries of the Baltic region”.
<https://rscf.ru/en/project/23-28-00374/>

Introduction

Over the past decade, Russian scholars have increasingly turned their attention to media analysis, particularly in the contexts of migration and religion. This field encompasses two distinct but largely disconnected research streams: the first focuses on how migrants are portrayed in media (Ablazhey, 2012; Azhgikhina, 2012; Fuller 2024; Ivleva & Tavrovsky, 2019; Karpenko, 2002; Mak, 2019; Stolic, 2019; Triandafyllidou & Monterio 2024; Ureta, 2011; Varganova, 2012; Vasiliev & Vlasova, 2020), while the second examines the construction of Islam’s image in media discourse (Elimam, 2019; Li & Zhang, 2022; Moore et al., 2008; Poole, 2002, 2005; Ragozina, 2017, 2018; Saifuddin & Matthes, 2016). Despite these parallel lines of inquiry, the intersection of migration and Islam remains on the periphery of scholarly discourse. One possible reason for this gap lies in the historical framing of migration research. As Malakhov and Letnyakov (2018) observed, until the early 2010s, migrants in Russia were predominantly analyzed through the lens of ethnicity, with little attention given to their religious affiliations. Consequently, the role of Islam in migration narratives has often been overlooked.

This study aims to bridge this gap by analyzing how media representations of Islam and Muslims are constructed and exploring their connection to migration processes. The analysis focuses specifically on media discourse in the city of Saint Petersburg and Leningrad Oblast, providing insight into how these portrayals shape broader perceptions of migration and religion.

This study employs the method of analytical reading of text data based on grounded theory. This approach involves interpreting text fragments, statements, and articles during the selection process, enabling the development of new theoretical positions. This study employs the method of analytical reading of text data based on grounded theory. In line with the study’s objectives, the theoretical sampling model is employed as a flexible tool for selecting articles and news reports, helping to compare diverse data from different platforms and time periods.

While the grounded theory method provides valuable insights, it has limitations—most notably, the need for a diverse mix of qualitative data to construct a comprehensive theory. By incorporating data such as interviews, observations, and media text analyses, this approach overcomes these limitations and aligns with the study’s objectives, structuring the material and building a theoretical foundation from the ground up. In this research, grounded theory serves as a tool for categorizing data and is complemented by content analysis, enhancing the depth and reliability of the media discourse study.

Muslims of Saint Petersburg and Leningrad Oblast

It is practically impossible to provide an exact estimate of Russia's Muslim population, as religious affiliation has not been officially recorded since the All-Union Population Census of 1939. Islam, however, is recognized as the country's second-largest religion by number of followers, with expert estimates ranging between 14 and 20 million. According to the 2017 Pew Research Center survey, 10% of respondents in Russia identified as Muslim, compared to 71% identifying as Orthodox Christian, and 15% professing no religion. Regions traditionally associated with Islam in Russia include Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, and the North Caucasus. Additionally, the growth of the Muslim population is closely tied to labor migration from Central Asian countries such as Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan (Cooperman et al., 2017).

Saint Petersburg is the largest industrial metropolitan area in the northwest of the country, with the population of 5.6 million people; the population of Leningrad Oblast is more than two million people. According to Gaidukov, the head of the Association Etna Research and Expertise Center, the number of Muslims in Saint Petersburg and Leningrad Oblast varies from 200 thousand to 1.4 million people (V Kazani Obsudili, 2018).

Since the 2000s, there has been an increase in labor migration from Central Asian countries and the Transcaucasian republics, which has led to the emergence of new prayer rooms, the exact number of which is difficult to determine. As Gladkii and Eidemiller (2018) note,

one of the most difficult challenges not only for the large Christian community of Saint Petersburg but also for the Muslim Ummah is labor migration, including from near and far abroad. Muslims joining the local, internally unstructured Ummah lead to misunderstandings, to the loss of control over the management of new communities by the Saint Petersburg Mukhtasibat Administration, not to mention the growing wariness of other residents of the megalopolis. In this regard, solving the problem of migrants' adaptation, as well as their religious education, could remove many pressing issues (Gladkii & Eidemiller, 2018; Trans. by V. Slivkina—V. S.).

Analysis of Media Discourse of Printed Publications and Online News Portals

In order to analyze the media discourse of printed publications and online news websites, articles were selected from top-rated periodicals and online resources: *Sankt-Peterburgskie Vedomosti*¹, Fontanka.ru², RBC.ru³, *Vyborg*⁴, and *Luzhskaya Pravda*⁵. Articles were selected using one of the three thematic tags: "Muslims,"

¹ <https://spbvedomosti.ru>

² <https://www.fontanka.ru>

³ <https://www.rbc.ru>

⁴ <https://gazetavyborg.ru>

⁵ <https://lpravda.ru>

“Muslim migrants,” or “Islam.” The discourse connection between the articles and the city and region was also considered. The three central categories identified are conceptually linked to the increasing migration flows from Muslim-majority countries to Europe and Russia.

Media of Saint Petersburg

In urban media, the analyzed news discourse is grouped around several storylines: “European migration crisis,” “risk zone,” and “preventive work with Muslim migrants.” An example of such discourse can be found in publications from *Sankt-Peterburgskie Vedomosti*, a daily newspaper that has been in circulation since 1728, covering cultural and social events in the city and across the country. Nine articles were selected for analysis, covering the period from August 2009 to January 2019, using the search tag “Muslim migrants.” Notably, this issue does not appear in the news discourse for the period from 2019 to 2024. It can be inferred that this shift is due to the sensitivity of the topic and the editorial board’s reluctance to provoke criticism from the Muslim community.

Migration to Western countries is primarily framed in the context of the European migration crisis. Recurrent discourse units, such as “Islamic expansion,” “refugees,” “Islamists,” and “sleeping terrorists,” are often accompanied by vocabulary with negative connotations, including “explosive blend,” “fraught with excesses and provocations,” and “interethnic conflict.” For instance, in the article “Balkany propuskaiut skvoz’ stroi” [The Balkans are Running the Gauntlet] (Podoprigora, 2015), migration and refugees in Serbia are discussed through the lens of the perceived threat of growing Islamic extremism among newcomers:

Young people who do not speak Serbian and do not look like refugees have started to be regularly encountered in Belgrade ... Most of the aliens who have appeared in Serbia are men under 27, almost all are of the Islamic faith, 56% do not have families with them, they do not like to be photographed, and are not constrained by money. The first thing that comes to mind is that well-trained Islamists who have been through war zones are arriving in the country under the guise of refugees. (Podoprigora, 2015; Trans. by V. S.)

There are currently about 1,000 jihadi warriors concentrated in Serbia, of which about 200 are in Belgrade. (Podoprigora, 2015; Trans. by V. S.)

Such presentation of the topic of migration and Islam contributes to the formation of a negative image of Muslims, thereby fueling the spread of Islamophobia: “Muslims already evoke complex associations among Serbs”; “potentially dangerous subjects capable of committing terrorist acts”; “a continuous belt of Muslim states in the underbelly of Europe” (Podoprigora, 2015; Transl. by V. S.) The connection between Muslim migration and the threat of religious extremism and terrorism is a recurring theme in European migration discourse. For example, several articles in the regional newspaper *Vyborg* and on news portals like Lenta.ru and RIA Novosti highlight this issue. Lenta.ru published articles such as “Evrope ukazali na skrytuiu

v migrantakh opasnost” [Europe was Shown the Hidden Danger in Migrants] (2019), “Liviia predupredila Evropu ob ugroze novogo nashestviia migrantov” [Libya Warned Europe About the Threat of a New Migrant Invasion] (2019), and “Svoi-Chuzhoi, Evropa priniala milliony bezhentshev. Pochemu teper’ ikh nenavidiat, schitaiut terroristami i khotiat vygnat” [‘Friend’ or ‘Foe’? Europe Has Accepted Millions of Refugees. Why Do They Now Hate Them, Consider Them Terrorists, and Want to Kick Them Out?] (Shvartsman et al., 2021). Similarly, RIA Novosti featured pieces like “Chechentsy napugali nemtsev. Te uzhestochaiut pravila migratsii” [Chechens Scared the Germans: They are Tightening Migration Rules] (Ibragimova, 2018) and “IG (zapreshchennaia v RF terroristicheskaia organizatsiia) gotovit novuiu volnu migratsii v Evropu, zaiavil glava WFP” [ISIS (a terrorist organization banned in the Russian Federation) is Preparing a New Wave of Migration to Europe, Says the Head of the WFP] (2018).

As shown by the examples above, it could be concluded that there is a strategy of negative stereotyping of Muslim migrants, which plays a significant role in the spread of Islamophobia. However, when the media shift to the Russian context, the discourse changes. In addition to the theme of terrorism threats, other aspects emerge, with formulations such as “victims of recruiters,” “migrant safety,” and “how to resist the influence of extremist ideology.”

The victims of ISIS⁶ recruiters (a terrorist organization banned in the Russian Federation) are most often young Muslim men who find themselves in conflict with the society and the state. Those who think that our region is not threatened by this are mistaken: it is in our large urban centers and their peripheries where one can find more sympathizers for the cause of the “Islamic State” (a terrorist organization banned in the Russian Federation) than in remote areas of the North Caucasus, because migrants come to us in masse. (Podoprigora, 2015; Trans. by V. S.)

According to the mufti, the spiritual department is also ready to join in the explanatory preventive work with migrants, providing its platform ... Legalization, the legality of stay on the territory of Russia is the cornerstone of migrants’ safety per se as well as in the face of ISIS recruiters (a terrorist organization banned in the Russian Federation). (Iushkovskaia, 2015; Trans. by V. S.)

Every year about 1.5 million migrants from Uzbekistan come to Saint Petersburg, 5 thousand Uzbeks study at universities in the so-called Northern Capital. Experts say that by helping them adapt here, it is possible to reduce the risks for the newcomers, protect them from the networks of extremist recruiters. (Iushkovskaia, 2018a; Trans. by V. S.)

⁶ ISIS has been designated a terrorist organization and is banned from all activities by the United Nations, United States, European Union, Russia, and many others. We condemn all forms of terrorism, particularly this organization's activities. ИГИЛ была признана террористической организацией; любая деятельность ИГИЛ запрещена в России, США, Европейском Союзе и многих других странах. Мы осуждаем любые формы терроризма, в том числе деятельность этой организации.

Thus, we observe a shift from negative judgments to neutral conclusions or statements that can be interpreted in different ways. These changes in discourse are reflected in the vocabulary used: “hidden danger” (1. European context)—“risk zone” (2. Russian context), “terrorists” (1)—“victims of recruiters” (2), “they are hated ... they want to kick them out” (1)—“preventive work” (2).

The issue of the hijab ban, which has been a topic of public debate for several years and is directly related to Islam, also received coverage in the media of Saint Petersburg. One such article, “Khidzhab razdora. Pochemu v shkolakh v Rossii zapreshchaiut musul'manskuiu odezhdu” [Hijab of Discord: Why Muslim Clothing is Banned in Schools in Russia] (Studenikina, 2019), exemplifies a discourse that contributes to the negative image of migrants. This is achieved through strategies that describe clothing and behaviors unfamiliar to local residents, reinforcing the cultural divide between locals and (im)migrants.

Regarding galoshes, slippers, and “weekend” tracksuits (alas, not such a rarity among migrants from Central Asia)—here it is difficult to disagree with the authors of the bill that was introduced in Tajikistan. In addition to this clothing and footwear, which is not typical for the cultural capital of Russia, city residents are often irritated by other habits of the newcomers. For example, collective squatting and cracking sunflower seeds on the street. (Studenikina, 2019; Trans. by V. S.)

The hijab, a women's garment that complies with Sharia law, has been described as “exotic clothing” and “Arab clothing” that “has recently acquired a negative connotation due to the rise of terrorism in the world” (Studenikina, 2019; Trans. by V. S.). The author employs a dichotomous description strategy, presenting mutually exclusive opposites, where one side is characterized solely by positive traits and the other by negative ones. The publication contrasts the hijab with the national costume of the Russian peoples, stating: “A quiet but consistent Arabization of Russian Islam and Russian Muslims is underway with the goal of making them ‘non-Russian,’ political and religious scholars warn us” (Studenikina, 2019; Trans. by V. S.). The author, however, fails to clarify that the hijab is primarily a modesty practice requiring women to cover their hair, neck, and shoulders, but not their face—unlike the niqab. Functionally, the hijab is similar to women's head coverings worn by adherents of other religions (such as the headscarves worn by Orthodox Christians, Old Believers, and Christian nuns). Mutual influences in clothing styles are common. This discourse, which focuses solely on negative aspects, contributes to the creation of a negative image of migrants, with their influence on Russian Muslim culture being framed exclusively in a negative light.

An even stronger “we—they” dichotomy is presented in the article “Peterburgskii parlament prosit gubernatora zakryt' ‘afganskoe kniazhestvo’ v tsentre goroda” [The Saint Petersburg Parliament Asks the Governor to Close the ‘Afghan Principality’ in the City Center] (2013), published by the news portal Fontanka.ru.

The article quotes Deputy V. Milonov, who spoke during a public discussion about the closure and subsequent reconstruction of the Saint Petersburg clothing market, Apraksin Dvor⁷:

Yesterday a famous holiday was celebrated. Some people who came to Saint Petersburg forget that they are no longer living in their village, and believe that their need to slaughter sheep should be fulfilled right on the street ... Milonov said that he visited the territory of Apraksin Dvor a day before and observed that “Instead of the city laws, the norms of medieval Sharia law are in effect there”, and that they sell extremely low-quality goods. He then advised “those who doubt the need to close Apraksin” to walk through the territory of this market and “try to find two signs of civilization on the territory of this Afghan principality.” (Peterburgskii Parlament, 2013; Trans. by V. S.)

This story addresses the contentious issue of city administration. However, the publication shifts its focus from addressing the real problems of the shadow economy and negative aspects of ethnic entrepreneurship to creating a negative image of the sellers and buyers at the Apraksin Dvor market, emphasizing their religious and ethnic backgrounds. The “authority strategy” is used here, drawing on Milonov’s position as a Deputy of the State Duma, which lends credibility to the discourse that portrays an antagonistic image of the “outsiders”—migrants from rural areas, adherents of Islam—who impose their own rules on the market in accordance with the “medieval norms of Sharia law” and refuse to integrate into Russian society.

The discourse concerning Muslim migrants on the news portal Fontanka.ru is realized in the context of the two main intersecting story lines: those involving holidays and those concerning various incidents. In total, our analysis included 144 articles from the “City” section, covering the period from January 1, 2000, to February 10, 2024.

The news block “Muslim Holidays” includes nine categories: “Eid Prayer”, “Holidays”, “City Disagreements/Controversies”, “Image of Islam/Muslims”, “Migrants”, “Law Enforcement”, “Number of Muslim Believers”, “Praying Muslims”, and “Cultural Code of the City”. The following categories are central (in terms of the number of generalized codes): “Holidays”, “Number of Believers/Praying Muslims”, and “Image of Islam/Muslims”. Most of the news articles in this section are centered around them.

For instance, the category “Holidays” includes two major Muslim holidays: Eid al-Adha (Kurban Bayram) and Eid al-Fitr (Uraza Bayram), as well as the national festival Sabantuy in the village of Syargi, which was attended by members of the city’s Muslim community. When describing Muslim holidays, the structure of the coverage typically includes three key elements: the estimated number of Muslims gathered for prayer, a brief cultural background on the history and significance of the holiday, and reports

⁷ At the site of the Apraksin Dvor market, Afghan trading points were located, as well as “the office of one of the cultural and educational organizations representing the interests of Afghans in St. Petersburg” (Ivleva, 2009; Trans. by V. S.).

on the maintenance of law and order, including any violations that occurred during the festivities. The image of Islam and Muslims constructed in these reports is closely tied to the portrayal of festive events. However, these descriptions often highlight incidents or facts that caused inconvenience for the local population. The frequent use of negative language in the discourse contributes to the formation of a negative image of Muslims and migrants:

It is mainly visitors who gather here ... people pray inside, in the courtyard and even outside the mosque fence—on the lawns and asphalt. (U Sobornoï Mecheti, 2007; Trans. by V. S.)

The prayer read by the muezzin is broadcasted via speakers placed on the street, the entire sidewalk near the building and the park up to Kamennooostrovsky Prospekt are covered with prayer rugs brought by the faithful. The mosque is very crowded and cramped. (Kurban-Bairam v Peterburge, 2009; Trans. by V. S.)

There was not enough space in and around the mosque for everyone, and during the prayer the faithful settled around the whole area: in Aleksandrovsky Park, directly on Kamennooostrovsky, near the Gorky monument. A large number of Muslims is still at the mosque. This year, many Africans are taking part in the celebration; they stand out with their colorful headdresses and clothing. (Musul'mane Peterburga Prazdnuiut Uraza-Bairam, 2019; Trans. by V. S.)

In the case of Sabantuy, an ethnocultural festival, the discourse shifts to create a positive image of the attendees. The “authority strategy” is also employed, as the words of G. Poltavchenko, the Governor of Saint Petersburg, are cited, thereby strengthening the positive connotations:

Tatars and Bashkirs have lived in Saint Petersburg since the city was founded. With their work and talent, they have enriched Saint Petersburg's culture and science, and contributed to the development of Saint Petersburg. And today, the sons and daughters of the Tatar and Bashkir people are fruitfully working for the benefit of the city on the Neva River. (Peterburg Otmechaet Sabantui, 2013; Trans. by V. S.)

The discourse encompassing the cultural background, history, and significance of holidays, along with the procedures for organizing festive events, is neutral in both content and social orientation:

Eid al-Adha is the main religious holiday of Muslims. It begins on the 10th of the month of Dhu al-Hijjah and lasts for three to four days. Historians believe that it originated in the pre-Islamic Arabia. For Muslims it is considered a time of strengthening of one's faith, liberating the soul from unrighteous intentions, and finding sincerity. The holiday is associated with the stories about Ibrahim (the biblical Abraham), who was going to sacrifice his son (Isaac in the Bible, Ismail in the Arabic tradition) and the construction of the main Muslim place of worship,

the Kaaba, in Mecca by Ibrahim and Ismail. Eid al-Adha coincides with the completion of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca (the holy city of Islam). (Kurban-Bairam v Peterburge, 2009; Trans. by V. S.)

Eid al-Fitr is one of the two main days of the Islamic calendar. On this day, the fast which was observed during the holy month of Ramadan ends. Eid al-Fitr is officially a non-working day in the republics of Adygea, Bashkortostan, Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia, Tatarstan, Chechnya and Crimea. (Bolel'shchiki iz Irana, 2018; Trans. by V. S.)

Descriptions containing historical and cultural information can be said to foster a tolerant attitude toward foreign cultural characteristics and their representatives by broadening readers' knowledge of other peoples' traditions. However, when juxtaposed with information that fosters migrantophobia and Islamophobia, references to the number of attendees and statements about the growing number of worshipers take on a negative connotation.

The number of Muslims gathered is not always explicitly specified. The vocabulary with a negative connotation contributes to the "mobility" of the discourse, shaping a negative image of Muslims and those attending the holiday prayer. For instance, instead of using neutral expressions like "a large number of people," terms such as "crowd" and "crowded" are employed, accompanied by phrases like "restrictions," "the area is cordoned off," "a pandemonium of Muslims" (Gor'kovskuiu Osazhdaiut, 2011); "Gorkovskaya has been opened but with restrictions. Look how crowded it is there" (Iakovleva, 2023; Trans. by V. S.); "The surrounding area is cordoned off by the police, a bus with riot police is on duty nearby" (Kurban-Bairam v Peterburge, 2009; Trans. by V. S.). The negative aspect of the gathering is further highlighted by emphasizing the amount of trash left behind: "The Muslims have dispersed, but the trash near the mosque remains"; "The faithful laid newspapers on the ground, and now the entire avenue is littered with trash. However, street cleaners have already begun to tidy it up" (Musul'mane Razoshlis', 2007; Trans. by V. S.). For comparison purposes, it should be noted that the number of people attending Easter or Christmas services is generally viewed as positive or neutral.

Summarizing the data gathered from the "Traffic during Muslim holidays" news reports, it can be said that these reports primarily focus on the category of "change/restriction of traffic" in connection with "mass religious events" occurring in the city during the main Muslim holidays, namely Eid al-Adha and Eid al-Fitr. Similar to the section on Muslim holidays, these news reports are supplemented with information about the number of Muslims attending the holiday prayers and a brief cultural background on the history and significance of the holidays. In describing the festive events, the authors also draw attention to issues within the city, such as the practice of sacrifice, restrictions or changes in traffic, and the coincidence or postponement of holidays.

The topic of migration in our analysis is represented by four publications. This section, which we have highlighted, includes only four articles that address issues related to Islamic migration. An uneven distribution of discourse is evident here. On the

one hand, there is recognition of the labor shortage and the fact that certain sectors of the economy cannot meet their needs without the recruitment of labor migrants.

Leningrad Oblast is experiencing a shortage of personnel when it comes to construction, agriculture, utilities, and seasonal work”, the Governor added. “Both permanent and temporary employees are needed, including unskilled ones. The construction of two large-scale facilities alone, Ruskhimalliance and the Baltic Gas Chemical Complex, will require 76 thousand workers. (Aleksandr Drozdenko, 2021; Trans. by V. S.)

On the other hand, there is a predominance of storylines, themes, and aspects where events that cause inconvenience for residents, pose a danger, and are described with either explicit or implicit negative connotations. According to some researchers, the term *Gastarbeiter* is ambiguously interpreted in public discourse and often carries a negative semantic charge, describing people who, “due to their ‘cheapness,’ present a ‘threat’ to Russian society” (Abashin, 2012, p. 7; Trans. by V. S.). The use of this term reinforces the stereotyping of Muslim migrants as a “problem group” and promotes a “paternalistic attitude towards them” (Abashin, 2012, p. 7; Trans. by V. S.), which can be illustrated by the article “V Peterburge sozhdadut tsentr pomoshchi gastarbaiteram” [A Center for Helping Gastarbeiter Will Be Created in Saint Petersburg] (2009).

In the media, the category “migrants” turns out to be closely linked with the topic of Islam:

Previously, as reported by Fontanka, the two-story barracks was a dormitory for migrants. It was regularly visited by migration service employees with riot police. Since 2009 businessmen from Central Asia have been hatching the idea of creating a mosque at Sennoy Market and having received the approval from the city, were able to rent the building legally. After the redevelopment, the second floor was turned into a prayer hall with an area of about 700 square meters. (Musul'mane Peterburga Zavershili Post Pod Dozhdem, 2017; Trans. by V. S.)

A 2022 report about taxi drivers illustrates the connection between the categories of “migrant” and “Muslim,” contributing to the formation of a negative image of Muslim migrants. The report highlights the social boundary between the host society and migrant taxi drivers, specifically those from Uzbekistan. These Muslim taxi drivers are portrayed as a large group violating Russian laws—such as driving without a license—and are depicted as a tight-knit community, united through Telegram8 channels:

The fact that despite the ban there is not just a large number but a very large number of taxi drivers with Uzbek documents in the city is evidenced by their activity in thematic chats on Telegram. There they speak mainly in Uzbek, discuss their various taxi driver things, congratulate each other on Muslim holidays, and solve some everyday issues. (Gorbunova, 2022; Trans. by V. S.)

⁸ Telegram™ is a trademark of Telegram Group Inc., its operational center is based in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates.

The publication states that Uzbeks communicate in Uzbek in their Telegram channel and that many taxi drivers in the city have Uzbek documents. However, no specific figures or comparisons are provided. This discourse reflects a negative attitude toward Uzbek taxi drivers, potentially fueling ethnic hatred. At the same time, it fails to address specific issues that may be real but require a more nuanced approach.

This section also touches on the integration and legal status of migrants and their religious communities. The use of negatively colored vocabulary and negative portrayal of the events described is evident. The article “Albin i Kirillov lideriuit v media reitinge Smol'nogo” [Albin and Kirillov Lead in Smolny Media Rating] (2015) mentions that during a regional meeting of the Federal Migration Service, Vice Governor A. Govorunov highlighted the increase in the number of prayer rooms in Saint Petersburg that are “not under the control of the authorities or official clergy.”

The article “V Apraksinom dvore iskali ‘Brat’ev-musul’man’” [They Were Looking for the Muslim Brotherhood in Apraksin Dvor] (2013) covers the detentions of migrants in Apraksin Dvor. This story warrants special attention because it received double coverage: once in the “Incidents” section of Fontanka.ru and again in an article by journalist Timur Zainullin, who was detained during the raid in a prayer room. In the first case, the event is presented in the formal language of an official report, using negatively charged terms such as “trade is paralyzed” and “the faithful are loaded into *avtozak* [police van]:”

The operation is being carried out as part of the investigation of criminal cases initiated under Article 205.2 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (public calls to commit terrorist activity or public justification of terrorism) and Article 282 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (incitement to hatred or enmity, as well as humiliation of human dignity). As noted by the Federal Security Service, this concerns not only Russian citizens but also the foreigners who participated in the activities of (this) religious organization. However, not all of those present in the prayer rooms are connected with the alleged crimes. (V Apraksinom Dvore, 2013; Trans. by V. S.)

The second publication, “Oblava na Aprashke: Vzgliad iznutri” [The Raid on Aprashka: A View From the Inside] (Zainullin, 2013), was posted on media platforms on the same day, signed with “Interrogation room visited by Timur Zainullin.” This article provides an on-the-ground report, with the journalist’s own narrative reflecting his perspective on the events. Unlike the formal tone of an official report, the article begins with a description of the prayer room and the people gathered, using vivid language and a touch of irony:

It was quite cramped due to the number of the faithful. One can see various clothing brands flashing from all sides: Dolce&Gabbana, Armani, Pierre Cardin. Most of them were market employees. They were wearing whatever they themselves were selling. (Zainullin, 2013; Trans. by V. S.)

The article then describes the confusion of the people who came to pray but were detained by the security forces: “The people rushed to the door again. They were being waited for ... in masks, bulletproof vests, and with machine guns” (Zainullin, 2013; Trans. by V. S.). The journalist notes an attempt by the outraged people to resist the special forces, but this was stopped by a religious leader who demonstrated his authority among the believers: “‘No need,’ a tall man in white robes said, ‘everything will work out, let’s show them our strength but in prayer’” (Zainullin, 2013; Trans. by V. S.). The author reflects on his own feelings, but it is clear that many of those gathered shared the same emotions:

In order to avoid a stampede, people were asked to sit on the floor. Out of habit, the believers knelt down. One by one, they crawled on their knees toward the special forces, rubbing their knees on the cold floor, looking down the barrel of a machine gun. It was uncomfortable. (Zainullin, 2013; Trans. by V. S.)

The journalist also notes that the employees of Center E⁹ knew many things about Islam and Muslim organizations better than those detained.

From the Fontanka.ru “Incidents” section, during the first stage of the analysis, we selected 144 articles published between January 1, 2000, to February 10, 2024 using the search query “Muslims.” In the second stage, we examined 36 articles related to events in Saint Petersburg and Leningrad Oblast, which accounts for 24.3% of the total articles considered. The reported incidents can be divided into crimes committed by Muslims and crimes committed against Muslims. In the first case, the image of Islam/Muslims is primarily presented in connection with the threat posed by the terrorist organization Islamic State, which is banned in the Russian Federation.

News items related to the activities of Islamic State, a terrorist organization banned in the Russian Federation, make up 30.5% (11 articles) of the articles under review. Based on the text analysis, the following *in vivo* concepts—concepts rooted in the data around which the logic of the news story is built—can be identified: “IS¹⁰ recruiters,” “IS sympathizers,” “IS fighters,” “IS supporters.”

In this case, the image of migrants from Central Asian and Transcaucasian republics is linked to terrorist and extremist activities. As Ivleva and Tavrovsky note: “‘Villains’ are ‘young people, their images are individualized, their names and individual aspects of their biography are known,’ and ‘their ethnicity is usually emphasized’” (Ivleva & Tavrovsky, 2019; Trans. by V. S.). Additionally, we would add, their religious affiliation is often tied to confrontational groups within Islam.

⁹ Center E refers to the Center for Combating Extremism, a division in the Russian police responsible for countering extremism, including terrorism, radical ideologies, and any activities deemed a threat to public order or national security. The center is involved in surveillance, detaining suspects, and conducting operations against organizations or individuals accused of extremism.

¹⁰ ISIS has been designated a terrorist organization and is banned from all activities by the United Nations, United States, European Union, Russia, and many others. We condemn all forms of terrorism, particularly this organization's activities. ИГИЛ была признана террористической организацией; любая деятельность ИГИЛ запрещена в России, США, Европейском Союзе и многих других странах. Мы осуждаем любые формы терроризма, в том числе деятельность этой организации.

An example of such discourse can be found in the story about the preparation of a terrorist attack at Kazan Cathedral. The news first appeared in the “Incidents” section of the Fontanka.ru website in December 2017 under the headline “V Peterburge terroristy planirovali vzorvat’ Kazanskii sobor” [Terrorists in Saint Petersburg Planned to Blow Up Kazan Cathedral] (2017). The story was revisited in August 2018 when the verdict was announced, and two articles were published on the same day. One of them was titled “Sud po delu o podgotovke terakta v Kazanskom sobore zakryli ot pressy. Advokat zaiaivil ob ugrozakh” [Preparation of a Terrorist Attack in the Kazan Cathedral Trial Was Closed to the Press. The Lawyer Reported Threats]:

The investigators believe that Efimov, who had become interested in Islam, was planning to reserve a place in heaven by blowing himself up. The choice of the Kazan Cathedral was explained by the presence of the largest possible crowd and the minimum number of Muslims. (Sud po Delu, 2018; Trans. by V. S.)

In 2021, the editors revisited this story with the article “Otkrovenie terrorista: V 18 let on khotel podorvat’sia v Kazanskom sobore” [Confessions of a Terrorist: At 18 He Wanted to Blow Himself Up in Kazan Cathedral], based on a conversation between journalists and Evgeny Efimov, who is serving a sentence in a maximum-security penal colony. Such news attracts readers, boosting the publication’s ratings. According to the journalists themselves, the publication is meant to serve as a warning: “This candid conversation should be a warning to many Russian teenagers. As the prisoner told us, it is easy to get into a banned group but almost impossible to leave. The boys are literally being brainwashed” (Otkrovenie Terrorista, 2021; Trans. by V. S.).

Journalists emphasize that the young man could have studied at a university, enjoyed time with his peers, or gone on a date with a young woman, but due to his criminal choice, he ended up in prison. It is also noted that Evgeny admitted his guilt, acknowledging that “he could have done something terrible.” The publication highlights the danger of the planned terrorist attack: Saint Petersburg is a city frequented by many tourists from all over the world, and a “terrible tragedy” could have occurred. The article provides additional details not included in the first publication: “He [Efimov] was being prepared for the terrorist attack via the Internet, including psychologically: instructions came through Telegram channels” (Otkrovenie Terrorista, 2021; Trans. by V. S.).

The story of Efimov’s conversion to Islam is also shared: his father took him to the mosque for the first time to show that “Muslims and terrorists are not the same people, that it (Islam) is a peaceful religion” (Otkrovenie Terrorista, 2021; Trans. by V. S.). According to Efimov, his parents—“an Orthodox mother and an Old Believer father”—tried to “save him” from the influence of radical views. His mother opposed his conversion to Islam, while his father was not generally against Islam but did not accept radical movements. The publication concludes with the fact that Evgeny later wanted to study Orthodoxy. He even began studying it remotely and enrolled in a Sunday school.

This publication presents an ambiguous perspective on religions and inter-religious harmony. It contrasts religions by using a negative example to shape the

perception of one, while presenting another religion as an unequivocally positive alternative. However, the reality is much more complex. Overall, it can be concluded that the language of official news tends to be more neutral, whereas materials that include value judgments often contribute to the creation of a negative image of a particular religion.

The publication “lunoi peterburzhenke, zaderzhannoi za svastiku v metro, vmeniaiut eshche i ugrozu ubiistvom v adres musul'manki” [Young Saint Petersburg Woman Detained for Swastika in the Metro Also Charged With Threat to Kill a Muslim Woman] (2021) describes the actions of a young woman who, “threatening to use a knife, made unpleasant remarks about the nationality and religion of another passenger” (Trans. by V. S.). However, the text appears to downplay the young woman’s guilt by using language that minimizes the severity of her actions, portraying them as less intentional or harmful. For example, she is referred to as a “Valkyrie”—a mythological figure rather than a criminal—and addressed as a “young lady,” which softens the perception of her behavior. Readers quickly recognize this semantic manipulation, as reflected in comments like, “Fontanka is deleting unwanted comments condemning Nazis” (Trans. by V. S.).

This example illustrates how the choice of words in media coverage can influence public perception, subtly shifting focus or sympathy. RBC.ru, part of the RosBusinessConsulting Group of Companies, is a Russian information and analytical agency with “thematic verticals.” It has been operating as an Internet portal since 1993. For this analysis, we selected six articles published between April 4, 2017, and February 10, 2024. The articles were chosen by using the search tag “Muslim migrants,” and the selection included three general articles as well as three articles specifically related to events in Saint Petersburg and Leningrad Oblast.

Given the limited material, it is impossible to make quantitative generalizations regarding the strategies used to shape the image of Islam/Muslims. However, it is possible to illustrate certain topics covered by journalists and the corresponding structure of the media discourse under consideration. The collected material can be grouped into four main categories: “image of a migrant,” “migration process,” “adaptation and integration trajectories,” and “risk group.” It is important to note that RBC.ru more frequently than other publications employs the strategy of involving experts to assess and interpret issues and events.

For example, the image of a migrant is constructed around eight key concepts, primarily based on an interview with M. Khranova, head of the Institute of Demographic Research at the Russian Academy of Sciences (Tkachev & Vinogradova, 2024). According to the interview, which references a study by the Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VCIOM)¹¹, migrants from Central Asia, unlike Muscovites, prioritize strong family ties and children (42% of respondents favor a large family). National customs (80%) and religious traditions (74%) are also highly important to them. There is a tendency for migrants to settle on the outskirts of cities where housing is more affordable. In these areas, the proportion of migrant children attending schools is significantly higher than the city average. Regarding competition in the domestic labor market, “migrants often take jobs that locals generally do not want” (Tkachev &

¹¹ <https://wciom.com>

Vinogradova, 2024; Trans. by V. S.). At the same time, illegal migration contributes to the development of negative attitudes among the host society. As Khramova explains:

According to the common understanding, a migrant is often a semi-literate Uzbek or Tajik who does not have any professional competencies, is a hooligan, and does not speak Russian. In reality, such migrants are a small proportion, but they are the ones who constantly come to the attention of both our competent authorities and the population. (Tkachev & Vinogradova, 2024; Trans. by V. S.)

The experts' opinions are supported by a statistical forecast on the growth of the Muslim population in Russia. For example, in the article "Glava soveta muftiev predskazal rost doli musul'man v Rossii do treti" [The Head of the Council of Muftis Predicted an Increase in the Share of Muslims in Russia to a Third] (Kaliukov & Kir'ianov, 2019), experts and Muslim spiritual leaders project that the Muslim population could grow by 2050 to 15%, 30%, 50%, or even 80%. Citing data from the Pew Research Center in 2017, the article also notes that Muslims tend to be more religious than Christians:

In Russia, the Muslim population follows religious rules more strictly than the Christian population, and there are more Muslims who consider religion a "very important" part of their lives, pray daily, and attend religious services at least once a week. (Kaliukov & Kir'ianov, 2019; Trans. by V. S.)

Leaving aside the forecast concerning the increase in Muslim population, it should be noted that the issue raised by the head of the Council of Muftis concerning the need to build new mosques and "corresponding cultural and educational infrastructure in the largest cities of Russia" (Kaliukov & Kir'ianov, 2019; Trans. by V. S.) is already relevant today. Educational efforts on the part of Muslim leaders can play an important role in the adaptation and integration of migrants.

An article dedicated to the terrorist attack in the Saint Petersburg Metro in 2017 raises the issue of migrant communities as a medium for the dissemination of radical ideas and views:

Recruiters find their targets in dormitories, markets, mosques, and construction sites. As a rule, they say that migrant workers are treated unfairly in Russia because they are Muslims, they deserve a better life, and they should not allow their fellow believers to suffer. (Dergachev et al., 2017; Trans. by V. S.)

Emigrants from Central Asia, especially those who currently live in Russia, are in a very difficult situation, they have difficulty finding work and housing ... Because of this, they accumulate aggression, their views become sharper day by day, and it is very easy to recruit such people. (Dergachev et al., 2017; Trans. by V. S.)

Therefore, it can be said that RBC.ru goes beyond simple news reporting, aiming to provide deeper, evidence-based analysis, drawing on statistical data from research centers and insights from experts.

Regional Media

The local newspaper *Vyborg* presents news concerning the Vyborg district of Leningrad Oblast. The newspaper has undergone several name changes over the years, starting from its establishment in 1940. As stated on its website, the newspaper covers the most important events in the spheres of economics and local government, culture and history, healthcare, education, and sports. Forty articles mentioning Muslims were selected for analysis from April 22, 2014, to May 10, 2024.

The data from these publications are grouped into two main categories that set the thematic framework for the news stories and articles:

1. Positive discourse: the portrayal of the city as a multi-confessional and multi-ethnic space, where meetings, exhibitions, festivals, tournaments, and conferences with the participation of the Muslim community are held;
2. Coverage of events related to extremist and terrorist activities in Saint Petersburg and Leningrad Oblast.

In these articles, we can see a dichotomy between “peaceful branches of Islam,” associated with peoples who “profess traditional values,” and “terrorist groups within Islam.” In the first case, Islam is presented as a peaceful religion opposed to terrorism, while Vyborg is depicted as a multi-confessional city where Islam and Christianity peacefully coexist:

Islam is a peaceful religion and its main goal is peaceful existence and friendly relations with all traditional faiths of Russia. (Liubov' k Rodine, 2016; Trans. by V S.)

Vyborg has always been a multi-confessional city, where many nationalities lived under one roof ... it could not be otherwise, because both Muslims and Christians have lived in Vyborg amicably and for a long time. (Karsakov, 2024; Trans. by V. S.)

In the second case, the storyline of news reports is centered around such events as complicity in “terrorist activity,” “cyberterrorism,” “extremist activity, the practice of recruiting ISIS¹²,” etc.

At the same time, unfortunately the whole world has already realized that terrorist Islamist movements also exist. In Leningrad Oblast active work to counter such organizations and those who assist them is underway. (Souchastie, 2021; Transl. by V. S.)

Although the distinction between “traditional Islam” and “radical Islam,” or between “peaceful currents of Islam” and “radical currents of Islam,” is challenging to verify from scholarly and expert perspectives, such dichotomies significantly oversimplify

¹² ISIS has been designated a terrorist organization and is banned from all activities by the United Nations, United States, European Union, Russia, and many others. We condemn all forms of terrorism, particularly this organization's activities. ИГИЛ была признана террористической организацией; любая деятельность ИГИЛ запрещена в России, США, Европейском Союзе и многих других странах. Мы осуждаем любые формы терроризма, в том числе деятельность этой организации.

the actual diversity of Islam, including its schools, trends, religious practices, and local traditions. Nonetheless, this binary framing is frequently reproduced in broad media discourse (Ragozina, 2018). A similar pattern appears in an interview with an individual convicted of terrorist activities and planning an attack on the Kazan Cathedral, where references were made to “peaceful currents of Islam” versus “radical currents of Islam” (Otkrovenie Terrorista, 2021; Trans. by V. S.).

Furthermore, the topic of Islamic migration is associated with two main narratives: one concerning an illegal Islamic school (madrasa) in Saint Petersburg, where children of migrants from CIS countries were educated, and another involving a series of reports about increasing migration flows from “problematic Muslim countries” to Europe, particularly to Denmark and Finland.

In our opinion, when covering events related to terrorist activity it is important to include expert assessments of the events by representatives of the scholarly and religious community (Muslim community) in publications, since the involvement of experts changes the nature of the discourse. For instance, consider a fragment from an interview with V. Achkasov, who provides insights into the migration situation in the city:

Around 70% of labor migrants come to Saint Petersburg from small towns and villages in post-Soviet states. The profile of a typical foreign worker is as follows: a man under 39 years old, a rural resident from Central Asia, who arrived in Saint Petersburg without a visa, with a secondary education, lacking specialized professional training, possessing minimal knowledge of the Russian language, and having low legal awareness; he is ready to perform unskilled work ... Today, more than 80% of migrants are Muslim or come from Muslim countries. More than half of new arrivals do not have a profession. The percentage of migrants who speak Russian even at a minimal level is rapidly decreasing. It should be noted that most labor migrants are poorer today than in previous years. This has become especially acute since the beginning of 2014 in connection with the devaluation of the Russian ruble. (Iushkovskaia, 2018b; Trans. by V. S.)

Achkasov views migrants as an integral part of the urban community. While discussing the challenges of migrants’ adaptation and integration, he highlights the city authorities’ lack of experience in managing the large-scale influx of international migration:

Saint Petersburg is in a rather difficult situation. This is caused by the lack of experience of the city authorities in dealing with a mass flow of international migrants of all categories, the absence of mechanisms for integrating newcomers through NGOs, social services and diasporas. (Iushkovskaia, 2018b; Trans. by V. S.)

Achkasov identifies several negative characteristics and examples but grounds his observations in specific facts and research materials. The balanced perspective of this expert is evident in an earlier publication, where he observes that the voices of migrants “are not heard at all, nor are there reports about the positive contributions they make to the development of our economy and culture, or to the improvement of our everyday life” (Achkasov, 2011; Trans. by V. S.).

An example of discourse informed by expert opinions from religious leaders is the article “We are United by Faith” [Nas Ob’ediniaet Vera] (2018), published in *Luzhskaya Pravda*, a sociopolitical local newspaper for the Luzhsky district of Leningrad Oblast. This newspaper has been published since 1918, has a biweekly circulation of 3,800–4,000 and its own website. For our analysis, we selected two articles, one from 2018 and the other from 2023. The 2018 publication centers on an interview with I. A. Abusarov, the chairman of the Muslim Community of Luga and Luzhsky district. This community, registered in 2018, is part of the centralized organization Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Russian Federation. The interview explores concepts such as “traditional Islam,” “multinational community,” “features of adaptation and integration,” and “second generation.” According to Abusarov, the positive image of Islam is closely tied to the diverse Muslim community in Luga:

Among us there are Tatars, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Azerbaijanis—we are all united by faith ... traditional Islam preaches universal human values, condemns violence and bloodshed. (Nas Ob’ediniaet Vera, 2018; Trans. by V. S.)

The expert shares a distinct perspective and offers recommendations for fostering social harmony, emphasizing the importance of educational initiatives:

There should be no drug dealers or militant supporters of terrorist organizations banned in Russia among us; we are against extremism, violence and bloodshed ... All acts of religious extremism, nationalism and ethnic hatred come from an extreme ignorance and lack of knowledge of traditions, not only religious but also secular. In our multinational country, it is necessary to spread knowledge so that people strive to engage in dialog among traditional cultures and faiths. In this regard, religion plays an important role as an integral part of an established cultural tradition—which is true for any nation. (Nas Ob’ediniaet Vera, 2018; Trans. by V. S.)

However, the involvement of religious figures as experts is not always justified—the mentality of exclusivity pertaining to religions can lead to bias and prejudice in assessments. For instance, the statements of the Patriarch of the Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and all Rus’, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church, had a noticeable influence on the anti-immigrant discourse. At the 2023 World Russian Council, he remarked:

At first, Gastarbeiters appear as complete strangers, foreigners. They can’t speak, then they start to communicate in Russian a little, and then they marry Russians, register, and become citizens ... Such people do not become close to us either in faith or in culture. They have their own faith and their own culture. (Patriarkh Zaiavil, 2023; Trans. by V. S.)

His words were subsequently echoed through direct quotations or paraphrased by prominent speakers across various publications, such as the article “Patriarkh

zaiavil o riske 'poteriat' stranu' iz-za migrantov s inoi veroi" [Patriarch Warns of Risk of "Losing the Country" Due to Migrants of a Different Faith] (2023; Trans. by V. S.).

Conclusion

In response to the 2017 terrorist attack in the Saint Petersburg Metro, which received widespread coverage in local media, the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Saint Petersburg and Leningrad Oblast strongly condemned the terrorists' actions. Additionally, they organized a blood drive for the victims among Muslims and hosted a conference:

In the days following this tragic event, an international conference aimed at condemning any form of violence was held in Saint Petersburg at the initiative of the Chairman of the Russian Muslim Spiritual Directorate and the Council of Muftis of Russia, Mufti Sheikh R. Gainutdin. The conference began with a collective prayer for the repose of those who died and the speedy recovery of those injured in the tragedy. (Akhmadeev, 2019; Trans. by V. S.)

However, the news itself was not broadcast on news channels, despite expressing an "open view" of Islam. This perspective emphasized that Muslims and Islam are not a source of terrorist threats, but rather a "partner" in opposing extremism and promoting peaceful coexistence and a shared future (The Runnymede Trust, 1997).

In this context, the mediatization of all aspects of modern life is reflected in the significant impact the media have on shaping perceptions of Muslim migrants. The spread of various phobias, including Islamophobia, serves as a simplistic means of consolidating society in response to the unpredictability and complexity of the adaptation and integration processes that migrants face in the new conditions of the host society: "These fears are based not on the presence of migrants themselves or even on their number, but on the increasing difficulties with their integration into the host society" (Dyatlov, 2011; Trans. by V. S.).

From a theoretical perspective, it can be concluded that the process of shaping the image of Islam/Muslims in the context of migration follows two main strategies:

1. By attributing and stereotyping negative characteristics, which contributes to Islamophobia and hostility towards Muslim migrants;
2. By informing, appealing to authority, attracting expert opinion, personification, exemplification, and other methods, which help reduce the social distance between Muslim migrants and citizens of the host society, thereby facilitating the process of social integration.

The first strategy may seem simpler for the media, but its negative consequences often lead to tension and conflict within society. The second strategy, however, focuses on long-term efforts and educational initiatives that promote inclusion, peace, and positive social change.

References

Abashin, S. N. (2012). Sredneaziatskaia migratsiia: Praktiki, lokal'nye soobshchestva, transnatsionalizm [Central Asian migration: Practices, local communities, transnationalism]. *Ethnographic Review*, 4, 3–13.

Ablazhey, N. N. (2012). Obraz trudovogo migranta v presse i massovom soznanii rossiian [The image of a labor migrant in the press and the mass consciousness of Russians]. *Bulletin of NSU. Series: History, Philosophy*, 11(6), 17–23.

Achkasov, V. A. (2011) Integratsiia trudovykh migrantov v prinimaiushchee soobshchestvo: Rol' SMI [Integration of labor migrants into the host community: The role of the media]. *Political Expertise: POLITEX*, 7(4), 41–51.

Akhmadeev, K.N. (2019). Islam v SPb v nachale XXI veka [Islam in Saint Petersburg at the beginning of the 21st century]. *Islam in the Modern World*, 15(3), 151–162. <https://doi.org/10.22311/2074-1529-2019-15-3-151-162>

Albin i Kirillov lideriut v media reitinge Smol'nogo [Albin and Kirillov Lead Smolny's Media Rating]. (2015, August 25). Fontanka.ru. <https://www.fontanka.ru/2015/08/26/140/>

Aleksandr Drozdenko i Nikita Murov otkryli migratsionnyi tsentr v Lenoblasti [Alexander Drozdenko and Nikita Murov open a migration center in the Leningrad Oblast]. (2021, December 21). Fontanka.ru. <https://www.fontanka.ru/2021/12/21/70331609/>

Azhgikhina, N. (Ed.). (2012). *Obraz trudovogo migranta iz Tsentral'noi Azii v zerkale moskovskoi i natsional'noi rossiiskoi periodiki* [The image of a labor migrant from Central Asia in the mirror of Moscow and national Russian periodicals]. I. I. Matushkina Publishing House.

Bolel'shchiki iz Irana i Marokko otprazdnovali Uraza-bairam v Peterburge [Fans from Iran and Morocco celebrated Eid al-Fitr in Saint Petersburg]. (2018, June 15). Fontanka.ru. <https://www.fontanka.ru/2018/06/15/013/>

Cooperman, A., Sahgal, N., & Schiller, A. (2017, May 10). *Religious belief and national belonging in Central and Eastern Europe*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2017/05/CEUP-FULL-REPORT.pdf>

Dergachev, V., Sidorkova, I., & Rozhdestvenskii, I. (2017, April 10). *Reportazh RBK: Kak "tikhii mal'chik" iz Osho stal terroristom-smertnikom* [RBC report: How a "quiet boy" from Osho became a suicide bomber]. RBC.ru. <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/10/04/2017/58ea61ce9a79470eda97883d>

Dyatlov, V. I. (2011). "Grazhdane blizhnego zarubezh'ia" i drugie... *Dinamika formirovaniia stereotipov* ["Citizens of the near abroad" and others... Dynamics of stereotype formation]. *Druzhba Narodov*, 4.

Elimam, A. S. (2019). Media, translation and the construction of the Muslim image: A narrative perspective. *International Journal of Comparative Literature and Translation Studies*, 7(2), 24–32. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijclts.v.7n.2p.24>

Evrope ukazali na skrytuiu v migrantakh opasnost' [Europe was shown the hidden danger in migrants]. (2019, April 25). Lenta.ru. <https://lenta.ru/news/2019/04/25/extremists/>

Fuller, J. (2024). Media discourses of migration: A focus on Europe. *Language and Linguistic Compass*, 18(4), Article e12526. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lnc3.12526>

Gladkii, Iu. N., & Eidemiller, K. Iu. (2018). Islam v Sankt-Peterburge: Konvergentsiia vo vremeni i prostranstve [Islam in Saint Petersburg: Convergence in time and space]. *Society. Environment. Development*, 2, 26–33.

Gorbunova, E. (2022, April 15). "Sitimobil"—vse? Taksoparki dumaiut, chto delat' s tremia tysiachami priezzhikh voditelei s "nepravil'nymi" dokumentami [Is it the end for citymobil? Taxi companies ponder what to do with three thousand migrant drivers with "incorrect" documents]. Fontanka.ru. <https://www.fontanka.ru/2022/04/15/71260985/>

Gor'kovskuiu osazhdaiut bol'shie gruppy musul'man [Gorkovskaya station surrounded by large groups of Muslims]. (2011, August 30). Fontanka.ru. <https://www.fontanka.ru/2011/08/30/006/>

Iakovleva, I. (2023, April 21). Gor'kovskuiu otkryli, no s ogranicheniiami. Smotrite, kak tam liudno [Gorkovskaya station reopened but with restrictions. See how crowded it is]. Fontanka.ru. <https://www.fontanka.ru/2023/04/21/72238349/>

Ibragimova, G. (2018, September 5). Chechentsy napugali nemtsev. Te uzhestochaiut pravila migratsii [Chechens scared the Germans: They are tightening migration rules]. RIA Novosti. <https://ria.ru/20180905/1527619602.html>

IG (zapreshchennaia v RF terroristicheskaia organizatsiia) gotovit novuiu volnu migratsii v Evropu, zaiavil glava WFP [ISIS (a terrorist organization banned in the Russian Federation) is preparing a new wave of migration to Europe, says the head of the WFP]. (2018, April 26). RIA Novosti. <https://ria.ru/20180426/1519455850.html>

lunoi peterburzhenke, zaderzhannoi za svastiku v metro, vmeniaiut eshche i ugrozu ubiistvom v adres musul'manki [Young Saint Petersburg woman detained for swastika in metro also charged with death threats against a Muslim woman]. (2021, February 4). RBC.ru. <https://www.fontanka.ru/2021/02/04/69748355/>

Iushkovskaia, I. (2015, December 1). Voina za molodye umy [The war for young minds]. *Sankt-Peterburgskie Vedomosti*, 225.

Iushkovskaia, I. (2018a, July 6). Kak ne dopustit' mezhnatsional'nye konflikty v Peterburge [How to prevent interethnic conflicts in Saint Petersburg]. *Sankt-Peterburgskie Vedomosti*, 120. https://spbvedomosti.ru/news/politika/opasnaya_distsantsiya/

Iushkovskaia, I. (2018b, October 5). Pod flagi mirnogo islama [Under the banners of peaceful Islam]. *Sankt-Peterburgskie Vedomosti*, 185. https://spbvedomosti.ru/news/country_and_world/pod_flagi_mirnogo_islama/

Ivleva, I. V. (2009) *Trudovye migranty v gorodskoi ekonomike* [Labor migrants in the urban economy]. *The Journal of Sociology and Social Anthropology*, 12(3), 128–149.

Ivleva, I. V., & Tavrovsky, A. V. (2019). Obrazy trudovykh migrantov v rossiiskikh massmedia [Images of labor migrants in Russian mass media]. *Ethnographic Review*, 1, 149–165. <https://doi.org/10.31857/S086954150004186-4>

Kaliukov, E., & Kir'ianov, R. (2019, March 4). *Glava soveta muftiev predskazal rost doli musul'man v Rossii do treti* [Head of the Council of Muftis predicts Muslims will make up a third of Russia's population]. RBC.ru. <https://www.rbc.ru/society/04/03/2019/5c7d312f9a794786546fa2de>

Karpenko, O. (2002). Iazykovye igry s “gostiami s iuga”: “Kavkaztsy” v rossiiskoi demokraticeskoi presse 1997–1999 [Language games with “guests from the South”: “Caucasians” in the Russian democratic press of 1997–1999]. In V. A. Tishkov (Ed.), *Multiculturalism and the transformation of post-Soviet societies* (pp. 162–192). IEA RAS.

Karsakov, S. (2024, May 10). *Na uborku vyborzhtsy vyshli vsem mirom* [Vyborg residents come together for a community clean-up]. Vyborg. <https://gazetavyborg.ru/news/na-uborku-vyborzhtsy-vyshli-vsem-mirom/>

Kurban-Bairam v Peterburge vstretili spokojno [Eid al-Adha in Saint Petersburg passed peacefully]. (2009, November 27). Fontanka.ru. <https://www.fontanka.ru/2009/11/27/018/>

Li, K., & Zhang, Q. (2022). A corpus-based study of representation of Islam and Muslims in American media: Critical discourse analysis approach. *International Communication Gazette*, 84(2), 157–180. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048520987440>

Liubov' k Rodine—chast' very [Love for the Motherland is part of faith]. (2016, February 5). Vyborg. <https://gazetavyborg.ru/news/lyubov-k-rodine---chast-very/>

Liviia predupredila Evropu ob ugroze novogo nashestviia migrantov [Libya warns Europe of the threat of a new wave of migrants]. (2019, April 16). Lenta.ru. <https://lenta.ru/news/2019/04/16/migranti/>

Mak, J. (2019). *East Asian representation in British television and cinema* [Unpublished Master's thesis]. University of Glasgow.

Malakhov, V., & Letnyakov, D. (2018). Islam v vospriiatii rossiiskogo obshchestva: Sravnitel'no-politicheskii aspekt [Perception of Islam in the Russian society: Comparative dimension]. *State, Religion and Church in Russia and Worldwide*, 36(2), 248–271.

Moore, K., Mason, P., & Lewis, J. (2008). *Images of Islam in the UK: The representation of British Muslims in the national print news media 2000–2008* (Working Paper). Cardiff University. <https://orca.cardiff.ac.uk/id/eprint/53005>

Musul'mane Peterburga prazdnuiut Uraza-bairam [Muslims of Saint Petersburg celebrate Eid al-Fitr]. (2019, June 4). Fontanka.ru. <https://www.fontanka.ru/2019/06/04/012/>

Musul'mane Peterburga zavershili post pod dozhdem [Muslims of Saint Petersburg end their fast in the rain]. (2017, June 25). Fontanka.ru. <https://www.fontanka.ru/2017/06/25/005/>

Musul'mane razoshlis', no musor u mecheti ostalsia [Muslims have dispersed, but the trash near the mosque remains]. (2007, Decdember 20). Fontanka.ru. <https://www.fontanka.ru/2007/12/20/039/>

Nas ob'ediniaet vera [We are united by faith]. (2018, May 15). *Luzhskaya Pravda*. <https://lpravda.ru/news?id=1864>

Otkrovenie terrorista: V 18 let on khotel podorvat'sia v Kazanskom sobore [A terroris's revelation: At 18, he wanted to blow himself up in Kazan Cathedral]. (2021, April 13). Fontanka.ru. <https://www.fontanka.ru/2021/04/13/69864737/>

Patriarkh zaiavil o riske "poteriat' stranu" iz-za migrantov s inoi veroi [Patriarch warns of risk of "losing the country" due to migrants of a different faith]. (2023, October 25). RBC.ru. <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/25/10/2023/653912d79a7947f8a37d8363>

Peterburg otmechaet Sabantui [Saint Petersburg celebrates Sabantuy]. (2013, June 30). Fontanka.ru. <https://www.fontanka.ru/2013/06/30/042/>

Peterburgskii parlament prosit gubernatora zakryt' "afganskoe kniazhestvo" v tsentre goroda [The Saint Petersburg Parliament asks the governor to close the "Afghan principality" in the city center]. (2013, October 16). Fontanka.ru. <https://www.fontanka.ru/2013/10/16/044/>

Podoprigora, B. (2015, November 6). Balkany propuskaiut skvoz' stroi. [The Balkans are running the gauntlet]. *Sankt-Peterburgskie Vedomosti*, 208. https://spbvedomosti.ru/news/politika/balkany_propuskayut_skvoz_stroy/

Poole, E. (2002). *Reporting Islam: Media representation of British Muslims*. I.B. Tauris.

Poole, E. (2005). The effects of September 11 and the war in Iraq on British newspaper coverage. In E. Poole & J. E. Richardson, *Muslims and the news media* (pp. 89–102). I.B. Tauris. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9780755695652.ch-008>

Ragozina, S. A. (2017). Analiz leksicheskoi sochetaemosti leksemy "islam" v rossiiskikh pechatnykh SMI (2010–2013) [The co-occurrence range of the word Islam in the Russian Print Media (2010–2013)]. *Islamovedenie*, 8(1), 112–130. <https://doi.org/10.21779/2077-8155-2017-8-1-112-130>

Ragozina, S. A. (2018). Zashchishchaia "traditsionnyi islam" ot "radikal'nogo": Diskurs islamofobii v rossiiskikh SMI [Defending "traditional Islam" from "radical": Discourse of Islamophobia in Russian media]. *State, Religion and Church in Russia and Worldwide*, 2, 272–299.

Saifuddin, A., & Matthes, J. (2016). Media representation of Muslims and Islam from 2000 to 2015: A meta-analysis. *International Communication Gazette*, 79(3), 219–244. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048516656305>

Shvartsman, V., Naumova, E., & Smantser, V. (2021, November 3). *Svoi-Chuzhoi, Evropa priniala milliony bezhentsev. Pochemu teper' ikh nenavidiat, schitaiut terroristami i khotiat vygnat'* [Friend or Foe? Europe has accepted millions of refugees. Why do they now hate them, consider them terrorists, and want to kick them out?]. Lenta.ru. https://lenta.ru/articles/2021/11/03/migrant_crisis/

Souchastie—tozhe prestuplenie [Complicity is also a crime]. (2021, June 9). Vyborg. <https://gazetavyborg.ru/news/leningradskaya-panorama/souchastie--tozhe-prestuplenie/>

Stolic, T. (2019). Media representation of migration and racism. *European Journal of Communication*, 34(6), 691–697. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323119887838>

Studenikina, A. (2019, January 29). Khidzhab razdora. Pochemu v shkolakh v Rossii zapreshchali musul'manskuiu odezhdu [The hijab of discord: Why Muslim clothing is banned in Russian schools]. *Sankt-Peterburgskie Vedomosti*, 15. https://spbvedomosti.ru/news/country_and_world/khidzhab_razdora/

Sud po delu o podgotovke terakta v Kazanskom sobore zakryli ot pressy. Advokat zaiavil ob ugrozakh [Court hearing on the Kazan Cathedral terror plot closed to the press. Lawyer reports threats]. (2018, September 8). Fontanka.ru¹³.

The Runnymede Trust. (1997). *Islamophobia: A challenge for us all*. <https://www.runnymedetrust.org/publications/islamophobia-a-challenge-for-us-all>

Tkachev, I., & Vinogradova, E. (2024, February 10). Glava Instituta demografii — RBC: "Rossii nuzhno borot'sia za migrantov" [Head of the Institute of Demography to RBC: "Russia needs to fight for migrants"]. RBC.ru. <https://www.rbc.ru/economics/10/02/2024/65bbab919a79478bcd1aed9f>

Triandafyllidou, A., & Monterio, S. (2024). Migration narratives on social media: Digital racism and subversive migrant subjectivities. *First Monday*, 29(8). <https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v29i8.13715>

U Sobornoj mecheti moliatsia neskol'ko tysiach chelovek. [Several thousand people pray at the Cathedral Mosque]. (2007, December 20). Fontanka.ru. <https://www.fontanka.ru/2007/12/20/66813010/>

Ureta, I. (Ed). (2011). *Media, migration and public opinion: Myths, prejudices and the challenge of attaining mutual understanding between Europe and North Africa*. Peter Lang.

V Apraksinom dvore iskali "Brat'ev-musul'man" (terroristicheskaja organizatsiia zapreshchennaja v RF) [Apraksin dvor searched for "Muslim Brotherhood" (a terrorist organization banned in the RF)]. (2013, February 8). Fontanka.ru. <https://www.fontanka.ru/2013/02/08/184/>

¹³ <https://www.fontanka.ru/2018/08/09/68651062/>

V Kazani obsudili monitoring "islamskogo radikalizma" v sub'ekтах Rossiі [Monitoring of "Islamic radicalism" in Russian regions discussed in Kazan]. (2018, November 16). Seldon.News. <https://news.myseldon.com/ru/news/index/198799942>

V Peterburge sozdatut tsentr pomoshchi gastarbaiteram [Saint Petersburg to create a center for migrant worker assistance]. (2009, January 22). Fontanka.ru. <https://www.fontanka.ru/2009/01/21/060/>

V Peterburge terroristy planirovali vzorvat' Kazanskii sobor [Terrorists planned to blow up Kazan Cathedral in Saint Petersburg]. (2017, December 15). Fontanka.ru. <https://www.fontanka.ru/2017/12/15/087/>

Varganova, O. F. (2015). *Obraz trudovogo migranta v federal'nykh i regional'nykh SMI (po rezul'tatam kontent-analiza)* [The image of a labor migrant in federal and regional media (based on the results of content analysis)]. *Sociological Science and Social Practice*, 3(11), 81–93.

Vasiliev, V. I., & Vlasova, K. V. (2020). *Obraz migrantov v rossiiskikh internet-SMI v period pandemii COVID-19*. [The image of migrants in Russian online media during the COVID-19 Pandemic]. *Bulletin of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 1(3), 44–51.

Zainullin, T. (2013, February 8). *Oblava na Aprashke: Vzgliad iznutri* [Raid on Apraksin dvor: An inside look]. Fontanka.ru. <https://www.fontanka.ru/2013/02/08/215/>



ARTICLE

Unveiling Compensatory Mechanisms of Muslim Minority Groups in Hungary

Jhanghiz Syahrivar

President University, Bekasi, Indonesia

Tamás Gyulavári

Corvinus University of Budapest, Budapest, Hungary

Chairy Chairy

President University, Bekasi, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

The growing population of Muslim consumers and their increasing economic influence have driven the expansion of Islamic goods and services across Europe. However, it is essential to examine how the scarcity of Islamic products and services—or the lack of an Islam-friendly environment, particularly for those living abroad—shapes the behaviors and preferences of Muslim minority groups. In an era of increasing secularization, understanding the complexities of religious practices is crucial, especially for business practitioners seeking to meet the diverse needs of Muslim consumers. This phenomenological study explores the underlying motivations behind compensatory mechanisms among Muslim minorities. Using a qualitative approach, 20 participants from Muslim communities in Hungary took part in in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and observational studies to examine their compensatory behaviors while living abroad. The analysis identified ten key themes, offering valuable insights into the diverse dimensions of compensatory mechanisms in the Islamic context and their implications for businesses and policymakers in evolving societies.

KEYWORDS

compensatory mechanism, Islam, Muslim consumers, minority group, halal

Introduction

Islamic consumerism has attracted significant scholarly attention in recent years. Sandıkcı (2018) posits that the past few decades have been marked by a global religious revival, particularly in Islamic revivalism and the commercialization of Islamic symbols. Gauthier (2018, p. 382) highlighted “the marketization of religion,” in which religious goods, services, and experiences are produced and sold to specific market segments primarily for profit. Rinallo and Alemany Oliver (2019) argued that gaining deeper insight into religious consumption practices could shed light on little-understood phenomena in an increasingly secularized society. Furthermore, it is essential to examine how the scarcity of Islamic products and services—or the lack of an Islam-friendly environment, particularly for those living abroad—shapes the behaviors and preferences of Muslim minority groups.

In order to contextualize the present study, the distinctive characteristics of the Muslim community in Hungary need to be presented. Although Muslims represent less than 1% of Hungary’s population (Aytar & Bodor, 2019; Pap & Glied, 2018; Račius, 2021), the community exhibits considerable heterogeneity. It comprises long-established groups, such as Turks and Balkan Muslims (Pap & Glied, 2018), as well as more recent immigrants from Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and various Middle Eastern nations (Apipudin & Alatas, 2024; Rózsa, 2011). Predominantly, the community adheres to Sunni Islam (Aytar & Bodor, 2019); however, smaller contingents of Shia followers (e.g., Iranian immigrants) underscore the diversity of denominational practices. The long history of tensions between Hungarians and Muslims (see Lederer, 1992), combined with recent sociopolitical factors (Apipudin & Alatas, 2024; Rózsa, 2011; Syahrivar, 2021), contribute to the challenges facing the Islamic ecosystem in Hungary, making it harder for Muslims to practice their faith freely and sustainably. Drawing on three years of field observations in Hungary, we found that halal-certified products and services are predominantly available in Budapest (Where Can I Find Halal Food in Hungary?, 2016), the nation’s capital, where they are offered through a limited network of outlets and typically priced at a premium relative to conventional alternatives. Only a handful of certification companies operate in the country, including SGS Hungária,¹ a branch of industry-leading multinational company SGS (formerly Société Générale de Surveillance) headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. Moreover, the scarcity of dedicated Islamic institutions and community centers outside the capital compounds these difficulties, impeding the consistent fulfillment of religious obligations. Such constraints not only underscore the cultural and economic isolation of this minority but also illuminate the adaptive, compensatory behaviors observed among its members.

Compensatory behaviors in a religious context, especially within minority groups, have been relatively underexplored (Syahrivar, 2021). In brief, compensatory behavior refers to actions or strategies individuals employ to make up for perceived deficiencies or shortcomings in one aspect of their lives (Kang & Johnson, 2011; Koles et al., 2018; Mandel et al., 2017; Woodruffe, 1997). Despite the expanding literature on compensatory

¹ www.sgs.hu

behaviors, few researchers have attempted to connect this concept with specific religious practices, such as Islamic consumption (Syahrivar, 2021; Syahrivar et al., 2022). Generally speaking, Islamic (or halal) consumption is perceived as consumption activities driven solely by religious ideals (Usman et al., 2024), with other socio-psychological factors underlying such consumption activities largely unaddressed.

This study seeks to examine the underlying motivations that drive religious compensatory mechanisms among Muslim minority groups, particularly in response to the limited availability of Islamic products and services. The central research question is: What compels Muslims living in non-Muslim majority countries to adopt compensatory behaviors? Existing literature on religious consumption has consistently demonstrated a correlation between religiosity and consumer behavior (El-Bassiouny, 2017; Mukhtar & Butt, 2012; Syahrivar et al., 2022; Syahrivar & Pratiwi, 2018; Usman et al., 2024; Widyanto & Sitohang, 2021). Furthermore, previous research has explored the challenges faced by Muslims in non-Muslim majority societies and the potential conflicts that arise due to their religious practices (Andreassen, 2019; Leiliyanti et al., 2022; Richardson, 2019; Syahrivar, 2021). However, the deeper psychological and sociocultural mechanisms influencing compensatory behaviors in religious contexts remain insufficiently examined (Kurt et al., 2018; Syahrivar, 2021; Syahrivar et al., 2022).

Numerous investigations underscore the adverse ramifications experienced by individuals belonging to minority groups, including instances of discrimination, disparities in status (Ryff et al., 2003), and the imposition of acculturation (Syahrivar, 2021). The persistent sense of marginalization within society can yield divergent outcomes. On the one hand, individuals from minority backgrounds may succumb to the pressures of assimilation, while on the other hand, it may foster stronger solidarity among them. In both Muslim-majority and minority contexts, there is compelling evidence suggesting that the consumption of Islamic products and services is not solely driven by religious adherence but also serves as a means to address socio-psychological challenges through consumer activities (El-Bassiouny, 2017; Syahrivar, 2021; Syahrivar et al., 2022; Syahrivar & Pratiwi, 2018).

This study represents a pioneering endeavor to understand how Muslim minorities in Hungary adapt their religious practices in response to the scarcity of Islamic goods and services. Recent demographic trends indicate a steady rise in the Muslim population across both the European Union and Hungary (Hackett et al., 2017). This growth necessitates a closer examination of how Muslim minorities negotiate their religious identities and consumption practices in non-Muslim majority settings. While existing studies have shed light on religious consumption within predominantly Muslim contexts (e.g., Syahrivar et al., 2022; Syahrivar & Pratiwi, 2018; Usman et al., 2024), there remains a significant gap regarding the compensatory behaviors that emerge in environments where Islamic products and services are scarce. To be precise, our study delves into the subtle, multifaceted strategies employed by Muslims navigating a predominantly secular European environment (Apipudin & Alatas, 2024; Aytar & Bodor, 2019; Pap & Glied, 2018; Rózsa, 2011; Syahrivar, 2021). Through an integrative phenomenological approach (Groenewald, 2004; see also Constantinou et al., 2017) that combines in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and field

observations, the research uncovers how limited access to halal-certified products, cultural dissonance, and social pressures coalesce to shape both religious and consumption behaviors. This nuanced exploration not only refines our understanding of compensatory consumption processes and strategies within religious contexts (Syahrivar, 2021; Syahrivar et al., 2022) but also offers fresh insights into how Muslim minorities negotiate their religious identity amid conditions of institutional scarcity and social isolation. This study is warranted as it not only extends the current literature by exploring these underexamined mechanisms but also provides valuable insights for policymakers and business practitioners seeking to address the evolving needs of this influential community.

Literature Review

Compensatory Behavior

Compensatory behavior refers to actions or strategies individuals employ to counterbalance perceived deficiencies or shortcomings in one aspect of their lives (Kang & Johnson, 2011; Koles et al., 2018; Mandel et al., 2017; Woodruffe, 1997). These behaviors often arise in response to negative psychological states stemming from self-discrepancy, particularly when individuals perceive a gap between their actual and ideal selves (Jaiswal & Gupta, 2015). To mitigate uncertainties and maintain self-concept, individuals engage in compensatory behaviors, which serve as psychological coping mechanisms (Koles et al., 2018; Mandel et al., 2017).

In consumer behavior research, compensatory behaviors encompass various consumption patterns, some of which are chronic and maladaptive, such as conspicuous consumption, compulsive buying, addictive consumption, self-gift-giving, and compensatory eating (Kang & Johnson, 2011; Koles et al., 2018; Syahrivar, 2021; Syahrivar et al., 2022; Woodruffe, 1997). Mandel et al. (2017) identified several strategies through which individuals engage in compensatory behaviors, including directly addressing the source of self-discrepancy, symbolically signaling mastery in the perceived area of deficiency, dissociating from the source of discrepancy, distracting oneself from the discrepancy, or compensating in an unrelated domain.

The concept of compensatory behavior extends beyond general consumer behavior into the realm of religious consumption. Religious compensatory behaviors are driven by the idea that religious products function as supernatural compensators, providing existential coherence, meaning, and emotional well-being (Ellison, 1995). Historical precedents illustrate this phenomenon, such as the medieval church offering religious indulgences to compensate for transgressions (Wollschleger & Beach, 2011). Within Islam, Mittermaier (2013) explored the concept of “trading with God,” wherein Muslims contribute financially to Islamic causes to atone for sins and attain spiritual rewards. Not only do Muslims feel the need to materialize their piety, but they also seek to reinforce their faith and redeem themselves through religious consumption activities (Jones, 2010).

Recent studies have highlighted specific forms of religious compensatory behaviors among Muslims. For instance, Syahrivar (2021) provided insights into

Islamic product dissociation among Muslim women in the West, interpreting it as a compensatory strategy. Furthermore, Syahrivar et al. (2022) identified factors such as religious discrepancy, religious guilt, and religious social control as key influences on religious compensatory consumption among Muslims in Indonesia. These findings suggest that religious compensatory behaviors are shaped by internal psychological conflicts and external social pressures, reinforcing the need to further explore how religious identity and consumption intersect.

Muslims as a Minority Group

Muslims are not a homogeneous group, as variations in religious practice and belief are shaped by geographical location, cultural context, education, and socioeconomic status (Aytar & Bodor, 2019; Pap & Glied, 2018; Rózsa, 2011). Although Islamic tenets provide a common foundation, the interpretation and enactment of these beliefs differ widely. Scholars have documented how these differences become particularly pronounced when Muslims live as minorities in non-Muslim majority societies. In Hungary, for example, the challenges associated with being a religious minority are compounded by cultural misunderstandings, limited access to halal-certified products, and insufficient infrastructure for fulfilling religious obligations (Hazim & Musdholifah, 2021).

For many Muslim minorities, the immediate challenge is accessing halal-certified foods (Mumuni et al., 2018). In countries where the Muslim population is sparse, mainstream markets often do not carry halal-certified products. As a result, individuals may have to rely on specialized stores or even compromise on dietary observance out of necessity. Similarly, the difficulty of observing daily prayers is heightened by inflexible work schedules and the scarcity of dedicated prayer spaces, prompting many to develop adaptive strategies such as praying at home or in less conspicuous locations (Fadil, 2013).

Moreover, the experience of living as a minority often extends beyond dietary or ritual practices to include broader challenges of social and cultural identity (Duderija, 2007). The need to preserve religious identity while navigating the pressures of integration into a predominantly secular society may lead to feelings of isolation or alienation. Some Muslims, for instance, choose to practice their faith more discreetly to avoid potential discrimination, while others seek solidarity within local Muslim communities to reinforce a sense of belonging (Syahrivar, 2021). Such adaptive responses underscore the diversity of experiences within the community and caution against simplistic portrayals of Muslims as a monolithic group.

In addition, foundational research on social identity (see, e.g., Hogg, 2016) underscores that minority groups construct their identities through processes of social categorization and intergroup comparison, which in turn influence both intergroup dynamics and the ability of minority groups to negotiate their place in society. Norris and Inglehart (2012) further argue that Muslim migrants tend to develop a hybrid set of cultural values—one that lies between the traditions of their countries of origin and the norms of their host societies—reflecting an ongoing process of adaptation rather than rigid assimilation. Together, these studies

highlight that the integration process is not simply about conformity but involves negotiating complex, layered identities that influence both consumer behavior and broader social participation.

Methodology

Adopting a phenomenological approach (Groenewald, 2004), this study set specific eligibility criteria for participation: participants had to identify as Muslim and have resided in Hungary for an extended period. Their involvement was strictly voluntary, with no monetary incentives or gifts offered. In addition to drawing from existing literature on compensatory behaviors, the study employed various data collection methods, including in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, observations, and memos. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, semi-structured interviews were conducted, with conversations noted and audiotaped. The interviews were performed using the English language.

For the interviews, several key questions were formulated basing on the past research in religious and consumer behavior studies (El-Bassiouny, 2017; Jones, 2010; Kurt et al., 2018; Mittermaier, 2013; Negrea-Busuioac et al., 2015; Sandıkçı, 2020; Shah, 2019; Syahrivar, 2021) and expert opinions:

1. Perceptions of Minority Status: How do you, as a Muslim, perceive living in a non-Muslim majority country? The question explores participants' general experiences, feelings, and perceptions regarding their religious identity in a predominantly non-Muslim environment.
2. Coping With Socio-Psychological Challenges: How do you, as a Muslim, cope with socio-psychological challenges in such environments? This question examines the strategies used by Muslim minorities to manage psychological, emotional, and social pressures in non-Muslim societies.
3. Religious Practice and Adaptation: How do you, as a Muslim, fulfill your religious obligations while residing in a non-Muslim majority country? The question investigates how participants maintain their religious practices, such as prayer, fasting, and other religious commitments, in a secular or non-Islamic setting.
4. Challenges in Religious Adherence: What challenges do you encounter in fulfilling these obligations, and how did you overcome them? This question helps to identify specific obstacles Muslims face in practicing their faith and explores the ways they navigate these difficulties.
5. Consumption of Islamic Products: What are your experiences with using or consuming Islamic or halal-certified products? The question explores access, availability, and attitudes toward halal products, as well as potential compensatory behaviors when such products are scarce.

Interviews were conducted in settings convenient to participants, such as restaurants, shopping areas, or mosques, allowing them to behave naturally. To enhance validity, we triangulated our interview data with direct observations during halal shopping and consumption occasions and consultations with experts in Islam, consumer behavior, and psychology. Additionally, a focus group discussion (FGD)

was held in which all participants received identical interview questions. The FGD aimed to capture both shared and differing experiences, revealing similarities and contrasts that might not surface in individual interviews due to the sensitivity of the information, personal biases, or memory constraints (Kitzinger, 1995). Sampling for the qualitative research followed a “common sense” approach, engaging informants capable of providing rich early insights (Goulding, 2005). In total, the study involved 20 Muslim informants (Table 1), selected for their diverse life experiences illustrating compensatory consumption in the Islamic context.

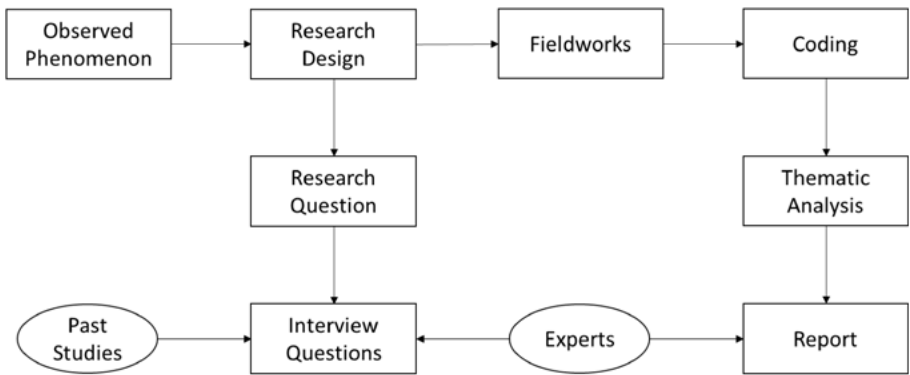
Table 1
Respondent Profile

Alias	Gender	Age	Origin	Marriage Status	Occupation	Academic Qualification
Participant 1	Female	24	Indonesia	Single	Student	Master's degree
Participant 2	Female	26	Indonesia	Married	Employee	Master's degree
Participant 3	Male	26	Indonesia	Single	Student	Master's degree
Participant 4	Male	18	Indonesia	Single	Student	Bachelor's degree
Participant 5	Male	26	Egypt	Single	Employee	Bachelor's degree
Participant 6	Male	25	Pakistan	Single	Employee	Bachelor's degree
Participant 7	Male	24	Indonesia	Single	Student	Master's degree
Participant 8	Male	30	Türkiye	Married	Educator	Doctoral Degree
Participant 9	Female	29	Tunisia	Married	Student	Doctoral Degree
Participant 10	Female	30	Azerbaijan	Married	Employee	Doctoral Degree
Participant 11	Male	35	Iran	Married	Entrepreneur	Bachelor's degree
Participant 12	Female	26	Tunisia	Single	Student	Doctoral Degree
Participant 13	Female	22	Indonesia	Single	Student	Bachelor's degree
Participant 14	Female	25	Pakistan	Single	Employee	Master's degree
Participant 15	Male	43	Iran	Married	Entrepreneur	Master's degree
Participant 16	Male	28	Iran	Married	Student	Master's degree
Participant 17	Female	23	Egypt	Single	Freelancer	Master's degree
Participant 18	Male	28	Azerbaijan	Single	Student	Doctoral Degree
Participant 19	Female	32	Iran	Married	Educator	Doctoral Degree
Participant 20	Female	20	Türkiye	Single	Student	Bachelor's degree

Data saturation guided the sampling process, and we determined that the inclusion of additional participants would have yielded redundant information. In qualitative research, saturation is reached when no new themes or insights emerge from successive interviews—a criterion that was met with our sample of 20 participants. This number aligns with established methodological guidelines (e.g., Constantinou et al., 2017; Guest et al., 2006), which suggest that smaller, well-targeted samples may suffice when prioritizing depth over breadth. In our study, the diversity in age, national origin, and religious practice among the participants provided a rich, multifaceted view of compensatory mechanisms among Muslim minority groups in Hungary. Once iterative analysis revealed recurring narratives and consistent thematic patterns, it was determined that additional data collection would not enhance the understanding of the phenomenon, thereby justifying the decision to conclude data collection at 20 participants.

The Comparative Method for Themes Saturation, or CoMeTS, was employed to organize and analyze interview data, ensuring a thorough exploration of identified themes (Constantinou et al., 2017). Validation of findings with participants further enhanced the study’s credibility (Goulding, 2005). A visual representation of the research framework was provided in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Research Framework



Note. Source: developed by the authors.

Findings

Religious Transgression

Muslims who live in secular non-Muslim majority countries, such as Hungary, found various inhibitors that prevented them from fully committing to their religious duties:

Participant 5: I think Hungarians are somewhat more religious compared to other Europeans that I know. But, you know, they’ve had some rough patches with Muslims in the past. So, like, I don’t think they’re super welcoming to Muslims. If

you're thinking about coming here to study or work, just be ready for the fact that practicing your Islam might not be as easy as you'd like.

Participant 6: There is a social environment that influences religious commitment. When I'm in my country, an Islamic country with strict Islamic laws, I will follow religious practices more often than when I'm abroad. But in Europe, you cannot practice your religion to the fullest because it's a different social environment. For instance, the mosque is few and if there is any, it's very far. Some places in Europe won't allow you to wear religious attire or else it will influence your relationship with others. In my opinion, in this kind of social environment, you're bound to limit your affection or link towards your religion.

Religious transgression occurs when Muslims deviate from Islamic duties. Failing to perform the five daily prayers and not adhering to a halal diet can be considered religious transgressions:

Participant 2: You know ... as Muslims we need to pray five times a day. However, when I'm in Hungary, it's difficult for me to fulfill this obligation because of conflicting schedules ... When the praying time came, I was still in the class listening to my professor ... My senior told me to just ask permission to leave and pray and come back to the class afterward ... but I could not possibly do it every time. I don't have the confidence to explain to him that I'm leaving for praying ... I also noticed that students would normally sit down in the class until it finished. I don't want to be the only one leaving the class. I also heard that other Muslims would just pray three times or even one time a day here.

Hypocrisy

Religious hypocrisy refers to the inconsistency between an individual's professed beliefs and their actual behavior, as well as the disparity between their moral assertions and their conduct in practice (Laurent & Clark, 2019; Syahrivar et al., 2022; Yousaf & Gobet, 2013). Through a series of observations, particularly during grocery shopping or dining experiences, it became evident that while some individuals emphasized the importance of consuming halal-certified foods or supporting Muslim-owned restaurants, this emphasis was not consistently reflected in their actual behavior.

Participant 7: My other option is to eat at a Chinese restaurant. Honestly, I like the menu and the taste better. I know it's not halal but it's chicken ... And they don't serve pork. I would only be worried if the restaurant served pork. So, when I go to a Chinese restaurant, I would observe if they serve pork or not.

Participant 15: When I hang out with my Muslim buddies, it's important to stick to certain Islamic customs, like praying or sticking to halal eats. But when I'm with others outside our circle, I make an effort to blend in and respect their ways, including drinking Pálinka (alcoholic drink) if I have to.

Hypocrisy occurs not only in matters of halal consumption but also in other Islamic practices:

Participant 9: To me, it's pretty straightforward. If you're chilling with your Muslim friends and you see them doing their five-time prayers, it's only respectful to join in. But if you're by yourself or with non-Muslim pals, there's no need to stress about practicing your Islam.

Guilt

Feelings of guilt may arise not only from failing to adhere to a halal diet but also from a broader sense of falling short in fulfilling religious obligations:

Participant 3: Apart from eating halal foods, as a Muslim, I'm also concerned with Friday prayer. I've been told that if I missed Friday prayer twice in a row, I was no longer a Muslim. So, when I picked courses, I tried my best to avoid courses on Friday. If I have no choice but to pick the one on Friday ... I think I would alternate between participating in the course on Friday and participating in Friday prayer the week after so long as I do not miss the prayer two times in a row. Thank God that it has never happened to me so far ... but it did happen to my [Muslim] friends. If it were me, I think I would feel guilty about it.

Feelings of guilt may also stem from a sense of falling short in upholding the family legacy:

Participant 14: For me, Islam is what keeps me connected to my parents. But living in Hungary, sticking to strict religious practices can feel overwhelming, so I do my best to be flexible around my non-Muslim friends. Still, I can't shake off the guilt I feel when I'm on the phone with my mother.

Faith Reinforcement

The enduring experience of guilt often necessitates a compensatory mechanism, wherein Muslims may strive to reaffirm their Muslim identity and faith, while also fostering stronger bonds with fellow Muslims through the consumption of halal food:

Participant 6: Because it's something that you eat and become a part of you. You're a Muslim because of what you practice and that includes what you eat [halal food].

Participant 8: I think it is not just about eating what is lawful as mandated by Allah but I would find that cooking and eating halal foods strengthen our faith and relationships ... especially since there aren't many of us here. You can say that no matter where we come from, we're united in halal foods.

According to Sandıkcı (2018, p. 464), Muslims yearn for the "Islamic versions of mainstream pleasures," aspiring to indulge in their preferred fast foods while still

adhering to their religious values, thereby avoiding feelings of guilt. Participating in halal consumption is viewed as a method to address any perceived hypocrisy or to reconcile their secular lifestyles with their religious beliefs:

Participant 6: Halal foods must be processed in certain ways so that they are clean and blessed by Allah hence I believe eating halal foods helps purify your body and soul.

Participant 7: I feel liberated in body and spirit after I eat halal [foods].

Social Control

Muslims engage in a form of mutual observation regarding religious practices, which serves as a manifestation of social control, defined as an effort to deter deviant behavior and influence significant others (Craddock et al., 2015; Gibbs, 1977). Their relatively small population size facilitates the monitoring of each other's conduct (Wollschleger & Beach, 2011). For instance, it is customary for Muslims to inquire about adherence to rituals like the five daily prayers, attendance at Friday mass prayer, or dietary habits on specific occasions. While social control serves to minimize deviant actions, it also creates tension for those with less fervent adherence. Consequently, Muslims may engage in symbolic actions, such as donning religious garments like the hijab or sharing meals of halal food with fellow Muslims, as a means of signaling their religious commitment to others.

Participant 13: When I'm with other Muslims, I always feel like I've to be on my best behavior. It's just the norm for them to ask if you want to pray together or if you've prayed at all during the day. And when it's fasting month, they're always reminding each other about it.

Escapism

Halal consumption is influenced not only by religious motivations but also by various non-religious factors. For Muslims residing abroad, feelings of homesickness, boredom, or loneliness are common, prompting them to seek solace through halal consumption. Engaging in halal consumption serves as a form of escapism, offering respite from overthinking current challenges and providing a temporary reprieve from distressing emotions.

Participant 19: Whenever I feel lonely, I would find my comfort in [halal] foods. I cannot eat random foods outside so I have to buy the ingredients from the halal meat shop and cook it myself. When I eat halal foods of my making, I feel like being transported to my hometown ... and it feels heart-warming.

Participant 4: Although I'm not very strict in what I eat, it does feel nice to be able to eat halal foods. When I eat halal foods, it reminds me of my mom who used to cook for me in Indonesia ... I feel at home. It does bring a pleasant memory for

me. I like eating and I think that eating [halal foods] would help me forget for a while about my piling homework and [low] grades ... I failed in one subject last semester and the grades for other courses are not that good. I don't think my parents would be happy to know about this.

Participant 18: Whenever I feel bored or lonely, I think it would help me eat halal food from the Turkish restaurant nearby.

Dissociation

Another recurring theme is “dissociation,” often stemming from a confluence of factors including identity confusion and marginalization. Our observations suggest that Muslims may distance themselves from products or symbols associated with Islam due to feelings of incongruence, conflicting identities, or external pressures (Syahrivar, 2021). For example, some Muslim women accustomed to wearing a hijab in their countries of origin may opt to forego it while residing abroad. The hijab is widely regarded by Muslims as emblematic of identity, belonging, religious commitment, and personal growth (Negrea-Busuioc et al., 2015). However, Muslims residing in secular, non-Muslim majority nations may encounter social alienation if they openly display religious practices or affirm their faith. Consequently, the suppression of Muslim identity is commonplace among Muslim minorities:

Participant 1: I started wearing hijab about a year before coming to Hungary. Here I would find myself among very few Muslim women who wear hijab. I started to realize that there were Muslim women who took off their hijabs so that they did not stand out too much in public. So here I am wondering if I should do the same.

Participant 2: So, I had this lab project a few months ago ... and we all [students] gathered in the laboratory ... At that time, the lab was overcapacity. Suddenly, this lab assistant approached me and gave me a look ... and then he asked me to leave the lab. I was the only one leaving the lab. I think I was picked because I'm the only one wearing a hijab. I cried in my heart and started wondering if I should just take off my hijab.

Male Muslims may also feel the need to alter their appearance so that they are more accepted by the local people:

Participant 6: I used to grow a beard in Pakistan as it is considered Sunnah [the conduct of Prophet Muhammad]. However, ever since I arrived in Hungary, I wanted to look clean and smart to my new friends ... I don't want to appear like some bad Muslim stereotype.

Participant 16: Back home, Islam's a big deal, and we take it seriously. But what's the point of being strict in Hungary? It's better to just roll with the locals and fit in. You can even copy their style of dressing.

One Muslim restaurant owner hesitated to put the “halal” logo sign and other Islamic symbols for fear of a negative response from his local customers:

Participant 11: Most of my customers are local people. If I were to put a “halal” sign, I fear that my restaurant would be unpopular among the local people.

In this study, a group of Muslim women (Participants 1, 2, 9, 10, 17, 19) participated in a focus group discussion (FGD). Notably, some respondents (Participants 1, 2, and 17) wore hijabs during the session, which they paired with long-sleeved shirts and tight jeans—an attire choice that appears to reflect a negotiation between religious expectations and secular fashion influences (Syahrivar, 2021). As mentioned earlier, the FGD was structured to elicit both shared and distinct experiences, thereby revealing commonalities and differences that might not surface in one-on-one interviews due to the sensitivity of the information, personal biases, or memory constraints (Kitzinger, 1995). During the FGD, all participants were presented with an identical set of interview questions and encouraged to share brief narratives about their experiences as members of Muslim minority groups. Following these initial responses, each participant was further queried about whether they had encountered similar experiences, allowing for a deeper exploration of their individual and collective challenges. All participants reported struggles in maintaining their Muslim identity. Moreover, those who wore hijabs during the discussion noted that they had adopted this practice before moving abroad, as they had previously lived in environments where hijab-wearing was the norm. This continuity suggests a bandwagon effect among Muslim women, whereby individuals adopt specific behaviors or consumption patterns to conform with the prevailing practices of their social group (Beta, 2021; Negrea-Busuioac et al., 2015; Syahrivar, 2021).

Incomplete Information

During the purchase activities, compensatory reasoning may occur when customers are confronted with incomplete information. Customers would voluntarily insert their narratives or stories to justify their purchase (Chemev & Hamilton, 2009). In the absence of halal clues (e.g., halal logo), Muslims may also use Muslim jargon to confirm the chef’s or the restaurant owner’s identity:

Participant 7: Of course, asking their religion directly would be awkward so when I entered a [Turkish] restaurant for the first time, I said “Assalamu Alaikum” [Islamic greetings]. When they replied with “Wa alaikum salaam” then I was certain they were Muslims.

Limited availability of halal ingredients characterizes the Hungarian market, with a notable concentration observed predominantly in Budapest, the nation’s capital. Within this urban setting, adherents to the halal diet, particularly the Muslim minority community, typically patronize a select few halal establishments for their meat and other dietary essentials. This exclusivity is underscored by the relative scarcity of such

outlets, contributing to a marginally higher pricing scheme compared to mainstream retailers (Mumuni et al., 2018). It is worth noting that for Muslims, assurance of halal authenticity extends beyond mere certification logos, often discernible through the shop's nomenclature, such as a Turkish name, further enhancing trust and adherence to dietary principles.

Devoted Muslims often find themselves needing to make adjustments when living abroad. In instances where halal certification is not readily accessible, Muslim minorities resort to alternative indicators, such as the product's country of origin or the religious affiliation of the sellers. These cues serve as their justification in the absence of formal halal certification or a recognizable logo:

Participant 20: After a few months, I realized that finding halal-certified foods is difficult. If any, it usually comes with extra costs. Usually, I buy food from Turkish since I believe most of them are Muslims ... so they must know how to serve halal foods.

There are always some doubts among Muslims:

Participant 7: But once on Friday, I asked this Turkish owner if he would go to the mosque together for Friday prayer. He said, "No." So I thought at that time that there was no evidence that just because someone was a Muslim, their cooking had to be halal.

Participant 10: The only stuff that's truly halal around here is what you whip up in your own kitchen.

Participant 11: I import my [chicken] meat from Türkiye because I don't believe that the meat that they [Muslims] sell here is halal. They might claim that it was halal.

Consumption of halal foods is not the sole mechanism through which Muslims reinforce their faith or offset their irreligious lifestyles while residing overseas. Muslims may also purchase Islamic products such as the Qur'an, hijabs, prayer beads, and Islamic art:

Participant 12: I have bought three Qur'ans for myself. I keep the smallest one with me all the time. I feel safe when I keep it in my pocket. It makes me remember about God. When I lack patience, the Qur'an reminds me to be patient. There are passages about patience in the Qur'an. When I'm not thankful, looking at the Qur'an reminds me to be thankful. I also bought Islamic products such as tasbeeh [prayer beads] for my mother.

Well-Being

Measuring the well-being of informants after engaging in compensatory behaviors is challenging. From our interviews, it became evident that most informants emphasized the beneficial aspects of the Islamic products they consumed, including their

ability to evoke happy memories, foster peace, impart a sense of cleanliness (both physically and spiritually), nurture warmth, and enhance togetherness. However, our observations suggest that negative experiences may also manifest, particularly in the form of cognitive dissonance.

According to Festinger (1962), cognitive dissonance occurs when an individual's actions contradict their beliefs or knowledge. For example, a Muslim woman wearing a hijab in public may face criticism from peers who deem it unsuitable for her personality or level of religious commitment, leading to cognitive dissonance (as observed with Participants 1 and 2). Similarly, a Muslim minority member encountering halal food in a Christian-majority society like Hungary—only to later learn of doubts surrounding its authenticity—may also experience cognitive dissonance (as exemplified by Participants 3, 11, and 17). Festinger (1962) posited that individuals strive to reduce such dissonance and attain consonance. This study argues that positive experiences reinforce compensatory consumption as a learned behavior, while negative experiences may sustain the cycle.

Moral Disengagement

Muslims residing in secular, non-Muslim majority countries, like Hungary, often find themselves in a continuous process of rationalizing their behaviors, particularly those that diverge from Islamic laws. For instance, they may underscore the necessity of survival abroad, thereby justifying deviations from religious obligations:

Participant 4: I don't consider myself as religious as some of my friends ... I do what I have to do to survive. Sometimes buying halal meats is not an option for me since they're slightly more expensive and [the shop] was located far from my apartment. My [academic] schedule is quite hectic so I cannot bother myself thinking if it's halal or not every day.

According to Bandura's theory of moral disengagement (2007), individuals often attempt to mitigate feelings of moral guilt and justify their transgressions by highlighting the noble or worthy motives underlying their actions. In our study, the endeavor for survival in an unfamiliar environment resonates with this noble theme. Moreover, individuals may lean on their faith in God's mercy as a mechanism to alleviate their guilt:

Participant 17: You see ... finding a mosque in Hungary is already difficult. What is the likelihood that what you eat here is truly halal? But I believe Allah is Merciful and now I'm in a survival mode so I believe He would understand.

Charzyńska et al. (2020) found that individuals dealing with alcoholism highlight the significance of a merciful deity and self-forgiveness in mitigating negative emotions like guilt and shame. Furthermore, it is suggested that the burden of sin or culpability for failing to adhere to religious precepts can be transferred onto Muslim producers:

Participant 3: Allah knows that I'm trying my best to find halal foods whenever I can so if it turned out that what I ate at this Turkish restaurant was not halal, I believe the sin goes to the owner of the restaurant ... not me.

Muslim minorities attempt to rationalize their shortcomings in fulfilling Islamic obligations by attributing these failures to external factors or agents, thereby pacifying their conscience. This aligns with the “displacement and diffusion of responsibility” mechanism delineated in Bandura’s theory of moral disengagement (2007), wherein individuals may seek to transfer personal accountability to accomplices involved in an immoral act.

Not all Muslim women choose to wear the hijab when residing abroad. For some, originating from regions where the hijab is perceived as restrictive or regressive, they actively distance themselves from it. In a group interview, two of our female Muslim informants appeared without hijab, opting instead for casual attire akin to that of local women. Both expressed a belief that Islam has undergone an evolution over time to accommodate contemporary circumstances, a perspective considered progressive among their peers. In a separate interview, another Muslim informant elucidated her choice to refrain from wearing the hijab:

Participant 12: In Tunisia, we [Muslim women] mostly wear hijab if we want to pray. I believe a Muslim’s righteous actions are more important than what she wears. To God, what is important is your heart and your actions. I cannot express my love for God simply by wearing a hijab while doing something wrong or evil. I feel that religion in action is more important such as helping someone in trouble or giving money to the poor ... Heaven or hell is not about what you wear, it’s about what you practice.

We posit that engaging in pro-social endeavors, such as charitable acts or donations, might serve as a means to offset perceived moral deficiencies or shortcomings, particularly in matters of religious practice. This form of compensation appears to be prevalent across various religions. For example, research conducted by Nica (2020) among Christians in the USA demonstrates that individuals who disengage from Christianity seek to redefine their non-religious identities through volunteerism and philanthropic activities. Through these endeavors, they aim to alleviate feelings of guilt, shame, and apprehension by asserting their inherent goodness despite their lack of religious faith.

Discussion

The study reveals themes concerning the reinforcement of one’s faith and the quest for absolution from past acts of irreligiosity or religious transgressions. Among Muslim minority communities, there is a belief that engaging in Islamic (halal) consumption not only strengthens their faith but also serves as a form of penance for their transgressions. Conversely, some individuals view dedicated Islamic consumption as a pathway to attaining heavenly rewards.

One specific issue within the domain of religiosity concerns religious hypocrisy, which denotes a disparity between an individual's religious attitudes or beliefs and their religious practices (Yousaf & Gobet, 2013). Laurent and Clark (2019) argued that the essence of hypocrisy lies in inconsistency, particularly between one's attitude and behavior, and in the imposition of one's views, either directly, by instructing others on how to act, or indirectly, by asserting that certain actions are wrong (direct/indirect). Religious hypocrisy manifests when moral claims surpass moral actions (Matthews & Mazzocco, 2017). According to costly signaling theory, individuals feel compelled to demonstrate their religious commitment to others for social acceptance, even though this behavior may be perceived as costly (especially by outsiders) and contradictory to their beliefs or attitudes (Henrich, 2009). Religious hypocrisy also occurs when a person fails to practice what they preach; while they may strongly believe in religious doctrines, their religious practices are often deficient due to worldly affairs. However, since most religions demand honesty from believers, dishonesty and cheating—as in the case of religious hypocrisy—can evoke psychological distress and self-devaluation (Wollschleger & Beach, 2011). Furthermore, individuals who engage in religious hypocrisy are typically aware of their duplicity (Statman, 1997). Hypocrites may deceive both others and themselves in pursuit of social benefits. Hence, hypocrites, in a sense, apply economic principles to religion by maximizing benefits and reducing costs (e.g., prayer, attendance at places of worship, donations).

Another issue is religious dissonance, which refers to the tension that arises from the discrepancy between one's personal beliefs or attitudes towards religion and those held by their environment (Hathcoat et al., 2013). Religious dissonance, particularly in the context of religious minorities, may lead to lower self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1962). When an individual adopts a religious viewpoint that differs from that of their significant others (such as parents, friends, or colleagues), it may result in internal conflict, leading to emotional distress and a negative self-evaluation.

Instances of religious transgression, hypocrisy, and cognitive dissonance often lead to moral dilemmas or feelings of guilt, necessitating the adoption of coping mechanisms or compensatory responses (Syahrivar et al., 2022; Wollschleger & Beach, 2011; Yousaf & Gobet, 2013). Muslims may engage in religious consumption as a means of demonstrating their commitment to Islam within their social circles. Despite not necessarily holding a positive attitude toward Islamic products, the misalignment between their sentiments and the expectations of family and peers may influence their preferences for such products (Mukhtar & Butt, 2012).

Navigating life as a religious minority in non-Muslim countries presents numerous challenges, often requiring Muslims to adapt their religious beliefs and practices to assimilate into their new surroundings. Consequently, many Muslim minorities grapple with internal conflicts and discrepancies, prompting them to seek compensatory measures to reconcile their convictions. As elucidated in this study, Muslim individuals faced significant struggles in upholding their religious principles, leading them to turn to religious products, such as halal-certified foods, as a means of preserving their identities. Essentially, food serves as a significant emblem of identity (Chairy & Syahrivar, 2019; Syahrivar et al., 2022). However, it is essential to acknowledge that not

all religious consumption originates solely from religious ideals; some instances stem from responses to various emotional challenges like loneliness or boredom. Additionally, certain forms of religious consumption aim to foster solidarity among Muslims. Muslim participants reported experiencing feelings of pleasure, solace, heightened motivation, and other positive emotions following the consumption of halal-certified foods.

An intriguing aspect of religious products is their role as an escape mechanism from life's harsh realities. For example, binge eating can serve as a coping mechanism to distract from distressing events and the resulting negative emotions or discomfort (Bennett et al., 2013). Religious minorities are especially drawn to religious products as they offer temporary relief from the challenges and anxieties encountered in unfamiliar environments. This study suggests that religious products provide therapeutic benefits to religious minorities, allowing them to temporarily alleviate their burdens and find solace amidst adversity.

Being a minority often entails heightened religious scrutiny. Within Muslim communities, individuals frequently monitor each other's adherence to religious duties. Consequently, Muslim minorities also feel compelled symbolically (or ostentatiously) to display their religiosity to fellow Muslims through religious consumption. They believe that consumption choices reflect one's identity, with true Muslims being identifiable through their adherence to halal practices. However, during fieldwork and observations, instances were noted where Muslims distanced themselves from religious products because of negative perceptions held by the local populace. In such cases, religious consumption can inadvertently project a negative image, making it unwelcome among those minorities seeking to preserve their positive image and newfound identities (Syahrivar, 2021).

Religious minority groups that engage in compensatory behaviors may turn to either religious or non-religious products. In the case of Muslims, religious products extend beyond halal-certified foods to include items that help preserve Islamic faith and identity—such as hijabs, Islamic attire and accessories, and literature—which are typically distributed among community members in Hungary. Conversely, some religious minorities may choose to abstain from religious consumption altogether. Regardless of whether individuals opt for religious or non-religious products, they tend to rationalize their consumption behaviors. Furthermore, Muslim minorities may resort to moral disengagement (Bandura, 2007) as a means of suppressing their inclination to compensate for perceived shortcomings.

Theoretical Implications

The theoretical implications of this study are multifaceted. Firstly, it extends the existing framework of compensatory consumption (Kang & Johnson, 2011; Koles et al., 2018; Mandel et al., 2017; Woodruffe, 1997) by incorporating religious dimensions, illustrating how the scarcity of Islamic products and services in non-Muslim majority contexts can trigger compensatory behaviors among Muslim minorities. This extension highlights that compensatory consumption is not solely a response to personal self-discrepancies but also a strategic adaptation to structural and cultural constraints.

Secondly, the study deepens our understanding of religious identity formation and reinforcement by demonstrating that the consumption of Islamic products, ranging from halal foods to symbolic items like hijabs, Islamic accessories, and literature, serves as a mechanism to mitigate feelings of marginalization and maintain faith amid societal pressures (Syahrivar, 2021). Thirdly, the findings reveal the role of moral disengagement (Bandura, 2007) in the process of integrating into a non-Muslim majority society, suggesting that individuals may rationalize deviations from religious norms as a coping strategy under conditions of scarcity and social isolation. Overall, the study contributes to theoretical discourse by bridging gaps between consumer behavior theories and religious studies, offering a fresh perspective on how cultural, economic, and institutional factors interact to shape the compensatory behaviors of religious minorities.

Managerial and Policy Implications

The study's findings offer important implications for both business practitioners and policymakers. For managers in the religious products sector, the data underscore the need to develop offerings that address the moral tensions experienced by religious minorities. Businesses should emphasize the intrinsic benefits of Islamic products, such as reinforcing faith, facilitating redemption, and enhancing well-being, while also investing in innovative marketing strategies that effectively communicate these advantages.

A key finding is that halal foods in Hungary are typically priced at a premium compared to conventional alternatives, primarily due to reliance on imported ingredients. In response, managers are encouraged to explore partnerships with local suppliers and invest in more efficient supply chain management to mitigate these cost disparities. Additionally, firms targeting Muslim consumers should consider adopting alternative Islamic symbols or cues beyond the conventional "halal" logo, which may carry negative connotations among non-Muslim consumers. Such alternative markers could reliably signal product authenticity, enhancing brand appeal across diverse consumer segments.

From a policy perspective, the findings suggest that regulatory intervention is needed to create a more accessible and cost-effective halal food market. Policymakers should consider establishing independent halal certification authorities to reduce dependence on imports and promote local production, thereby potentially lowering prices for Muslim consumers. Furthermore, fostering collaboration between governmental agencies and private-sector stakeholders could streamline the supply chain, ultimately better serving the growing Muslim minority in Hungary and across Europe.

Study Limitations

We wish to acknowledge the limitations of our study. Firstly, this research involved 20 Muslims living in Hungary, ranging in age from 18 to 43, including students,

entrepreneurs, educators, and early-career professionals. While we balanced gender representation, financial situations varied widely; for instance, students and early-career individuals often operated on tight budgets, whereas entrepreneurs and educators enjoyed more stability. This financial divide influenced daily life—students reported difficulties finding affordable halal groceries, while those with steady incomes navigated these challenges more easily. Secondly, gender differences emerged: women discussed societal judgments related to wearing the hijab, whereas men focused on the challenge of locating halal-certified foods. Thirdly, the study places significant emphasis on halal-certified foods, reflecting the limited availability of other Islamic products and services in the country. Fourthly, most participants were highly educated, which may mean their reflections on balancing faith with practicality differ from those with less formal schooling. Additionally, sampling bias may be present, as the overrepresentation of highly engaged Muslims might overlook the perspectives of less observant individuals. Future studies should incorporate greater socioeconomic diversity to fully capture Hungary's broader Muslim minority experience.

Conclusion

Building on qualitative insights from Muslim minorities in Hungary, this research reveals that the limited availability of halal products and supportive Islamic ecosystem prompts adaptive behaviors that reconcile religious ideals with everyday sociocultural constraints. The findings indicate that compensatory behaviors in the context of Muslim minorities function both as mechanisms for identity preservation and moral reconciliation, enabling individuals to manage tensions in a predominantly secular environment. These observations suggest that business practitioners and policymakers should reconsider tailored support and innovative supply-chain approaches to better address Muslim consumers' distinctive needs. Ultimately, by extending the compensatory consumption theory to encompass religious practices, the study lays a solid foundation for future investigations that capture the breadth and diversity of experiences among religious minority groups.

References

- Andreassen, B. O. (2019). The Norwegian political discourse on prohibiting Muslim garments. An analysis of four cases in the period 2008–2018. *Changing Societies and Personalities*, 3(4), 353–372. <https://doi.org/10.15826/csp.2019.3.4.082>
- Apipudin, & Alatas, A. (2024). Origin of Islamophobia in Europe: A case study of Hungary. *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization*, 14(1), 104–120. <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.141.07>
- Aytar, E., & Bodor, P. (2019). Discourses of being a Muslim woman in contemporary Hungary and the hijab paradox. *Quaderni di Sociologia*, 80, 33–50. <https://doi.org/10.4000/qds.2609>

Bandura, A. (2007). Impeding ecological sustainability through selective moral disengagement. *International Journal of Innovation and Sustainable Development*, 2(1), 8–35. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJISD.2007.016056>

Bennett, J., Greene, G., & Schwartz-Barcott, D. (2013). Perceptions of emotional eating behavior. A qualitative study of college students. *Appetite*, 60, 187–192. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2012.09.023>

Beta, A. R. (2021). Out of thin air: Emerging Muslim fashion entrepreneurs and the spectre of labour in Indonesia. *Continuum*, 35(6), 824–837. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2021.1993569>

Chairy, & Syahrivar, J. (2019). *Bika Ambon* of Indonesia: History, culture, and its contribution to tourism sector. *Journal of Ethnic Foods*, 6, Article 2. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s42779-019-0006-6>

Charzyńska, E., Gruszczyńska, E., & Heszen-Celińska, I. (2020). The role of forgiveness and gratitude in the quality of life of alcohol-dependent persons. *Addiction Research & Theory*, 28(2), 173–182. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16066359.2019.1642332>

Chernev, A., & Hamilton, R. (2008). Compensatory reasoning in choice. In M. Wänke (Ed.), *Social psychology of consumer behavior* (pp. 131–150). Psychology Press.

Constantinou, C. S., Georgiou, M., & Perdikogianni, M. (2017). A comparative method for themes saturation (CoMeTS) in qualitative interviews. *Qualitative Research*, 17(5), 571–588. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794116686650>

Craddock, E., vanDellen, M. R., Novak, S. A., & Ranby, K. W. (2015). Influence in relationships: A meta-analysis on health-related social control. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 37(2), 118–130. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01973533.2015.1011271>

Duderija, A. (2007). Literature review: Identity construction in the context of being a minority immigrant religion: The case of western-born Muslims. *Immigrants and Minorities*, 25(2), 141–162. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02619280802018132>

El-Bassiouny, N. M. (2017). The Trojan horse of affluence and halal in the Arabian Gulf. *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, 8(4), 578–594. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JIMA-12-2015-0094>

Ellison, C. G. (1995). Rational choice explanations of individual religious behavior: Notes on the problem of social embeddedness. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 34(1), 89–97. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1386525>

Fadil, N. (2013). Performing the *salat* [Islamic prayers] at work: Secular and pious Muslims negotiating the contours of the public in Belgium. *Ethnicities*, 13(6), 729–750. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796812471129>

Festinger, L. (1962). Cognitive dissonance. *Scientific American*, 207(4), 93–106. <https://doi.org/10.1038/scientificamerican1062-93>

Gauthier, F. (2018). From nation-state to market: The transformations of religion in the global era, as illustrated by Islam. *Religion*, 48(3), 382–417. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0048721X.2018.1482615>

Gibbs, J. P. (1977). Social control, deterrence, and perspectives on social order. *Social Forces*, 56(2), 408–423. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/56.2.408>

Goulding, C. (2005). Grounded theory, ethnography and phenomenology: A comparative analysis of three qualitative strategies for marketing research. *European Journal of Marketing*, 39(3/4), 294–308. <https://doi.org/10.1108/03090560510581782>

Groenewald, T. (2004). A phenomenological research design illustrated. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 3(1), 42–55. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690400300104>

Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods*, 18(1), 59–82. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05279903>

Hackett, C., Connor, P., Stonawski, M., & Potančoková, M. (2017, November 29). *Europe's growing Muslim population*. Pew Research Center. <http://pewrsr.ch/2zABqwg>

Hathcoat, J. D., Cho, Y., & Kim, S. (2013). Development and validation of the collegiate religious dissonance scale. *Journal of College and Character*, 14(2), 153–164. <https://doi.org/10.1515/jcc-2013-0020>

Hazim, H., & Musdholifah, N. (2021). Mediatization of Islam; The case of the Indonesian Muslims in Hungary. *The Journal of Society and Media*, 5(1), 42–57. <https://doi.org/10.26740/jsm.v5n1.p42-57>

Henrich, J. (2009). The evolution of costly displays, cooperation and religion: Credibility enhancing displays and their implications for cultural evolution. *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 30(4), 244–260. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2009.03.005>

Hogg, M. A. (2016). Social identity theory. In S. McKeown, R. Haji, & N. Ferguson (Eds.), *Understanding peace and conflict through social identity theory* (pp. 3–17). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-29869-6_1

Jaiswal, A. K., & Gupta, S. (2015). The influence of marketing on consumption behavior at the bottom of the pyramid. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 32(2), 113–124. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCM-05-2014-0996>

Jones, C. (2010). Materializing piety: Gendered anxieties about faithful consumption in contemporary urban Indonesia. *American Ethnologist*, 37(4), 617–637. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1425.2010.01275.x>

Kang, M., & Johnson, K. K. (2011). Retail therapy: Scale development. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 29(1), 3–19. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0887302X11399424>

Kitzinger, J. (1995). Introducing focus groups. *BMJ*, 311, 299–302. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.311.7000.299>

Koles, B., Wells, V., & Tadjewski, M. (2018). Compensatory consumption and consumer compromises: A state-of-the-art review. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 34(1–2), 96–133. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2017.1373693>

Kurt, D., Inman, J. J., & Gino, F. (2018). Religious shoppers spend less money. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 78, 116–124. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2018.03.019>

Laurent, S. M., & Clark, B. A. (2019). What makes hypocrisy? Folk definitions, attitude/behavior combinations, attitude strength, and private/public distinctions. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 41(2), 104–121. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01973533.2018.1556160>

Lederer, G. (1992). Islam in Hungary. *Central Asian Survey*, 11(1), 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02634939208400762>

Leiliyanti, E., Dewi, D. A., Putri, L. N., Fariza, F., Saputra, Z., Wiyakintra, A., & Albab, M. U. (2022). Patriarchal language evaluation of Muslim women's body, sexuality, and domestication discourse on Indonesian male clerics preaching. *Changing Societies and Personalities*, 6(3), 634–654. <https://doi.org/10.15826/csp.2022.6.3.193>

Mandel, N., Rucker, D. D., Levav, J., & Galinsky, A. D. (2017). The compensatory consumer behavior model: How self-discrepancies drive consumer behavior. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 27(1), 133–146. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcps.2016.05.003>

Matthews, M. A., & Mazzocco, P. J. (2017). Perceptions of religious hypocrisy: When moral claims exceed moral action. *Review of Religious Research*, 59(4), 519–528. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13644-017-0307-4>

Mittermaier, A. (2013). Trading with God: Islam, calculation, excess. In J. Boddy & M. Lambek (Eds.), *A companion to the anthropology of religion* (pp. 274–293). Wiley. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118605936.ch15>

Mukhtar, A., & Mohsin Butt, M. (2012). Intention to choose *Halal* products: The role of religiosity. *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, 3(2), 108–120. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17590831211232519>

Mumuni, A. G., Veeck, A., Luqmani, M., Quraeshi, Z. A., & Kamarulzaman, Y. (2018). Religious identity, community and religious minorities' search efforts for religiously sanctioned food: The case of halal food in non-Muslim majority markets. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 42(6), 586–598. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12423>

Negrea-Busioc, E., Daba-Buzoianu, C., & Cîrîță-Buzoianu, C. (2015). Unveiling Romanian Muslim women. An inquiry into the religious and identity-building meanings of the hijab. *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, 14(42), 147–171.

Nica, A. A. (2020). Leaving my religion: How ex-fundamentalists reconstruct identity related to well-being. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 59(4), 2120–2134. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-019-00975-8>

Norris, P., & Inglehart, R. F. (2012). Muslim integration into Western cultures: Between origins and destinations. *Political Studies*, 60(2), 228–251. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.2012.00951.x>

Pap, N., & Glied, V. (2018). Hungary's turn to the East: *Jobbik* and Islam. *Europe–Asia Studies*, 70(7), 1036–1054. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2018.1464126>

Račius, E. (2021). Experience of Muslims in Eastern Europe. In R. Lukens-Bull & M. Woodward (Eds.), *Handbook of contemporary Islam and Muslim lives* (pp. 171–189). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-32626-5_14

Richardson, J. (2019). Religious freedom in flux: The European Court of Human Rights grapples with ethnic, cultural, religious, and legal pluralism. *Changing Societies and Personalities*, 3(4), 303–318. <https://doi.org/10.15826/csp.2019.3.4.079>

Rinallo, D., & Alemany Oliver, M. (2019). The marketing and consumption of spirituality and religion. *Journal of Management, Spirituality and Religion*, 16(1), 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14766086.2019.1555885>

Rosenberg, M. (1962). The dissonant religious context and emotional disturbance. *American Journal of Sociology*, 68(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1086/223261>

Rózsa, E. N. (2011). *The exceptionality of Central Europe: The Muslim minorities* (HIIA Papers T-2011/17). Hungarian Institute of International Affairs. http://www.grotius.hu/doc/pub/FWVNNF/2014-07-27_n_rozsa_the-exceptionality-of-central-europe-the-muslim-minorities.pdf

Ryff, C. D., Keyes, C. L., & Hughes, D. L. (2003). Status inequalities, perceived discrimination, and eudaimonic well-being: Do the challenges of minority life hone purpose and growth? *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 44(3), 275–291. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1519779>

Sandıkcı, Ö. (2020). Religion and the marketplace: Constructing the “new” Muslim consumer. In F. Gauthier & T. Martikainen (Eds.), *The marketization of religion* (pp. 93–113). Routledge.

Shah, S. (2019). Does religion buffer the effects of discrimination on distress for religious minorities? The case of Arab Americans. *Society and Mental Health*, 9(2), 171–191. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2156869318799145>

Statman, D. (1997). Hypocrisy and self-deception. *Philosophical Psychology*, 10(1), 57–75. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09515089708573204>

Syahrivar, J. (2021). Hijab no more: A phenomenological study. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 60(3), 1969–1991. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-020-01068-7>

Syahrivar, J., Hermawan, S. A., Gyulavári, T., & Chairy, C. (2022). Religious compensatory consumption in the Islamic context: The mediating roles of religious social control and religious guilt. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 34(4), 739–758. <https://doi.org/10.1108/APJML-02-2021-0104>

Syahrivar, J., & Pratiwi, R. S. (2018). A correlational study of religiosity, guilt, and compensatory consumption in the purchase of halal products and services in Indonesia. *Advanced Science Letters*, 24(10), 7147–7151. <https://doi.org/10.1166/asl.2018.12428>

Usman, H., Projo, N. W. K., Chairy, C., & Haque, M. G. (2024). The role of trust and perceived risk on Muslim behavior in buying halal-certified food. *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, 15(7), 1902–1921. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JIMA-09-2021-0303>

Where can I find halal food in Hungary? (2016, December 8). HELPERS. <https://helpers.hu/other/can-find-halal-food-in-hungary/>

Widyanto, H. A., & Sitohang, I. A. T. (2022). Muslim millennial's purchase intention of halal-certified cosmetics and pharmaceutical products: The mediating effect of attitude. *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, 13(6), 1373–1394.

Wollschleger, J., & Beach, L. (2011). A cucumber for a cow: A theoretical exploration of the causes and consequences of religious hypocrisy. *Rationality and Society*, 23(2), 155–174. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1043463111404673>

Woodruffe, H. R. (1997). Compensatory consumption: Why women go shopping when they're fed up and other stories. *Marketing Intelligence and Planning*, 15(7), 325–334. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02634509710193172>

Yousaf, O., & Gobet, F. (2013). The emotional and attitudinal consequences of religious hypocrisy: Experimental evidence using a cognitive dissonance paradigm. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 153(6), 667–686. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.2013.814620>



ARTICLE

Inclusive Urban Gateways: Towards Socially Just and Open Urban Systems

Mojtaba Valibeigi

Buein Zahra Technical University, Buein Zahra, Iran

Ayyoob Sharifi

The IDEC Institute, Hiroshima University, Hiroshima, Japan

Sakineh Maroofi

Buein Zahra Technical University, Buein Zahra, Iran

Sara Danay

Buein Zahra Technical University, Buein Zahra, Iran

ABSTRACT

This article reimagines the concept of urban gateways, highlighting their potential to promote social equity and inform policy decisions in urban development. The research explores how urban gateways can be adapted to meet contemporary needs, focusing on their evolving forms, functions, and conceptualizations. Using grounded theory, a case study of Shiraz's Qur'an Gate illustrates how the concept of a gateway can be reinterpreted as a cultural entity that remains relevant in urban planning. The analysis identifies five primary categories that define urban gateways: spatial, functional, environmental, social, and perceptual. These categories emphasize the potential for gateways to contribute to balanced urban development strategies that promote social justice. The research advocates for a transition from closed to open spatial systems in gateway design, driven by cultural, economic, and political considerations. This shift can lead to policies that foster social and economic balance, urban decentralization, and a more inclusive urban environment. By examining gateways as thresholds and nodes within urban networks, the research investigates their ability to connect local, regional, and even global scales. The concept of projective and topological spatial performance is introduced,

Received 27 June 2024

Accepted 23 February 2025

Published online 30 April 2025

© 2025 Mojtaba Valibeigi, Ayyoob Sharifi,

Sakineh Maroofi, Sara Danay

m.valibeigi@bzte.ac.ir, sharifi@hiroshima-u.ac.jp,

s.maroofi@bzte.ac.ir, Sara.danay94@gmail.com

suggesting ways in which gateways can be designed to redefine their roles within the evolving urban landscape. Ultimately, this article emphasizes the importance of reconceptualizing urban gateways as tools for promoting social equity and shaping policies toward more just and open urban systems.

KEYWORDS

urban gateway, cultural heritage, social policy, urban development, open spatial systems

Introduction

In the rapidly evolving landscape of Iranian cities, the traditional concept of urban gateways is undergoing a significant transformation. As cities expand and their boundaries become increasingly blurred, the need for innovative approaches to urban planning has emerged. This study examines the concept of urban gateways, focusing on their potential to promote social equity and inform policy decisions in contemporary urban contexts.

In the ongoing process of reconfiguring Iranian cities, their extensions are scattered and multinodal. This fragmentation challenges the traditional notion of clear urban edges. The urban gateway, as a long-standing concept in urban planning, can be reimagined within this new framework to address the evolving needs of these cities. A new approach to the gateway is necessary to respond to the flow space in the urban network and open spatial systems (Çalışkan, 2010; Ferguson et al., 2012). The reason is that global, regional and urban networks rely on different modes of transportation and communication to connect with each other. Thus, both the nature of flows and the type of crossings have changed (Andersson et al., 2015; Rodrigue, 2004). By understanding the complex interplay between urban form, social dynamics, and economic forces, we can harness the potential of urban gateways to create more equitable and sustainable cities.

Reconsideration of the role of urban gateways can lead to the creation of open spatial systems that promote social inclusion, economic opportunity, and environmental sustainability. These gateways have the potential of vital connectors, bridging gaps between diverse neighborhoods and promoting social cohesion. Moreover, the strategically aligned implementation of urban gateway projects will ensure that the benefits of urban development are shared equitably among all residents.

The open spatial systems feature permeability, flexibility, and adaptability. They are intended to accommodate multiple activities, promote social interaction, and encourage spontaneous encounters. The creation of such spaces can contribute to the development of a sense of belonging and community amongst people. Accordingly, this study aims to explore how urban gateways can be designed to facilitate social interaction, improve accessibility, stimulate economic development, and protect the environment.

In Shiraz, Iran, the capacity and permeability of the Qur'an Gate have changed over time. However, the concept of the gateway remains relevant within the urban and regional networks. Its connection with the foundations of social space that makes up the "territory" is guaranteed. The mobility of goods and people has made urban networks spread widely. Still, the territorial definition remains decisive and reliable.

Shiraz, like other big cities in Iran, gradually became more dependent on the automobile in the early 1930s. This dependence created a form of independence for the city where urban mobility was no longer carried out through the fixed routes of the past. The automobile allowed flexible mobility of the crowds in all directions. In a short period, cars changed the conventional patterns of mobility. Mass production processes were experienced, causing large-scale urban fabric spread (Arefian & Moeini, 2016; Kheirabadi, 2000; Sarmento & Kazemi, 2014; Sharifi & Murayama, 2013). Open urbanization was strengthened and observers have noticed that urban forms are losing their clear boundaries at the edges (Gu, 2019; Ni, 2013; van der Woude et al., 1990).

The city border started to disappear. Urban planning appeared as an independent field, based on the capability of steering the dynamic boundaries of the cities. Shiraz lost all its gates and the borders, and distinctions between the city and its surroundings became unclear. The current urban planning moved toward a corridor development plan. This caused the removal of unjustified elements. The new stage was an end to the contrast between the city and the center with the periphery and the terrain. The walls served to block the passageways. The gates acted as regulators of the entry of "strangers" into the city. However, they were abandoned. In between, the emerging new authorities were placed on power, technology, information, time, and speed (Arefian & Moeini, 2016; Pilehvar, 2021; Shabani & Kamyab, 2013). In 1936, during Reza Shah Pahlavi's era, the Qur'an Gate was destroyed. It was included in the development plan for the northern corridor of Shira. However, unlike other gates in Iran, it was rebuilt ten years later by the people themselves. With a new definition, it regained its role and continues to function as an urban element until today.

Since the mid-1950s, Iranian cities have experienced dynamic development and transformation. Controlling the city frontier within definite thresholds and boundaries became a serious concern (Arefian & Moeini, 2016; Madanipour, 2003, 2011). The urban fringes of cities are outlined by dynamic, dispersed development patterns, rather than controlled and legible functional areas and entrance areas (Ehlers & Floor, 1993; Madanipour, 2006a, 2006b). The case Qur'an Gate in Shiraz offers a valuable lens to explore the evolving role of urban gateways. Historically, gates served as physical and symbolic boundaries, regulating access to cities. However, with the advent of modern transportation and urban planning, their functions have shifted. This research investigates how gateways can be reimagined as dynamic elements within urban networks, contributing to social and economic balance, and fostering more inclusive urban environments.

While examining the historical and contemporary significance of the Qur'an Gate, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

- How can urban gateways be reconceptualized in the context of contemporary urban development?
- What new roles can gateways play in promoting social equity and inclusivity?

- How can the concept of gateways be applied to inform urban planning policies?

The study explores the historical evolution of the Qur'an Gate, its current function within the urban landscape, and its potential to serve as a model for rethinking urban gateways in other Iranian cities. By examining the gateway's semantic foundations and its spatial impact, this research seeks to provide insights into the future of urban planning and the role of gateways in shaping equitable and sustainable cities.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research approach, specifically grounded theory, to conduct a conceptual analysis of urban gateways. Grounded theory is a systematic method for developing theories from data, allowing for the exploration of complex phenomena and their underlying relationships (Drisko & Maschi, 2016; Kyngäs, 2020; Sabharwal et al., 2018). By focusing on the social and spatial dimensions of urban gateways (refer to Glaser & Strauss, 2006), this study intends to contribute to a deeper understanding of their role in promoting equitable and inclusive urban environments.

A comprehensive literature review was conducted to establish a strong theoretical foundation and identify key concepts related to urban gateways. The review focuses on understanding the differences between gates and gateways, identifying key characteristics of gateways, and exploring their potential roles in urban development. The review process involved the following steps:

Electronic databases such as JSTOR¹, Google Scholar², Web of Science³, and Scopus⁴ were used to identify relevant academic articles, books, and reports. Keywords such as "urban gateway," "gate," "urban design," "urban planning," "public space," and "social inclusion" were used to refine the search. Additional sources were identified through references cited in the initial search results. The identified sources were evaluated based on their relevance, credibility, and methodological rigor.

The case study of Shiraz's Qur'an Gate was selected based on its historical significance, contemporary relevance, and potential to illustrate the evolving role of urban gateways. The selection process involved:

1. Literature Review: A thorough review of existing literature on Shiraz's history, urban development, and cultural heritage.
2. Expert Consultation: Consultation with urban planning experts, historians, and local stakeholders to gain insights into the gate's significance and its role in the city's urban fabric.
3. Field Observation: On-site visits to the Qur'an Gate and its surrounding area to observe its spatial characteristics, usage patterns, and social dynamics.

Data Collection and Analysis were conducted simultaneously using grounded theory methodologies. The process involved:

¹ <https://www.jstor.org>

² <https://scholar.google.com>

³ <https://www.webofscience.com>

⁴ <https://www.scopus.com>

1. Document Analysis: Analysis of historical documents, urban planning documents, and policy reports related to Shiraz and the Qur'an Gate.
2. Field Observations: Systematic observation of the physical characteristics of the gate, its surrounding urban environment, and the activities and interactions taking place in the area.
3. Semi-Structured Interviews: In-depth interviews with key informants, including urban planners, architects, historians, and local residents, to gather insights into the gate's social and cultural significance.
4. Data Coding and Analysis: The collected data was coded and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns, themes, and relationships between concepts.
5. Theory Development: The analysis led to the development of a grounded theory that explains the social, spatial, and political implications of urban gateways. The theory focuses on how gateways can contribute to equitable and inclusive urban environments, and how they can be integrated into urban planning policies.

Urban Gateways: Connecting Cities and Communities

“Gateway” is a term with multiple interpretations and uses. While often associated with entrances or passages, it can also signify a point of connection or transition. In the context of urban planning, a gateway serves as a vital interface between a city and its surrounding areas (Punter, 2009). A gate, on the other hand, is typically a physical structure that controls access to a specific area. It may be a door, a barrier, or a series of barriers. Gates are often used to protect property, regulate traffic, or restrict access to certain individuals or groups (Hesse, 2010; Zaninović, 2022).

While both gateways and gates can serve as points of entry or exit, there are three key differences between them including function, scope, and intangibility. First, gateways are more about connection and transition, while gates are primarily about control and access. Second, gateways often encompass a broader area or concept, while gates are typically more localized and specific. Third, gateways can be physical structures, but they can also be intangible boundaries, such as cultural or economic zones. Gates are almost always physical structures (Burghardt, 1971; Melville, 2015; Scholvin, 2021; Scholvin et al., 2019). Urban gateways are more than just physical structures; they represent the intersection of urban and rural landscapes, the meeting points of diverse cultures, and the conduits for economic and social exchange. They are essential for understanding the dynamics of cities and their relationships with their hinterlands (Bangia, 1994; Gallent et al., 2006; Shibley et al., 2011; Singer et al., 2008; Woudsma, 2007).

The concept of a gateway emphasizes both flow and control. It serves as a location where people and goods move in and out of a city, while also acting as a point of regulation and management. Gateways can be physical structures, such as bridges, tunnels, or transportation hubs, as well as intangible boundaries, like cultural or economic zones. The social significance of gateways is immense. They are spaces

where individuals from different backgrounds come together, interact, and exchange ideas. Gateways can promote social cohesion, economic development, and cultural diversity. However, they also present challenges like congestion, pollution, and social inequality. These spaces represent connection, exchange, and transformation, illustrating the changes occurring at the urban edges of gateway areas (Abdullah, 2022; Bagheri & Mansouri, 2018). Careful planning and management are essential to ensure that gateways meet the needs of all citizens and positively impact the overall quality of life in a city. This consideration leads us to the question: How can we define a city gate according to the principles of inclusive urbanism?

Inclusive Urban Gateways: A Pathway to Equitable Cities

Inclusive design is vital in urban gateways, as it ensures that these key entry points into cities are welcoming, accessible, and equitable for everyone. By prioritizing the needs and experiences of all users—regardless of age, ability, income, or background—we can create vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable urban environments.

Traditionally, urban gateways have often been designed with a singular focus on aesthetics or functionality, neglecting the diverse needs and experiences of the people using them. This narrow approach has resulted in spaces that are often exclusive and inaccessible to many.

To address this issue, we need to adopt a more holistic approach that considers the needs of all users. By emphasizing accessibility, fostering social inclusion, stimulating economic opportunity, and promoting environmental sustainability, we can create urban gateways that are welcoming, inclusive, and equitable. Ensuring both physical and sensory accessibility, as well as respecting diverse cultural backgrounds, is crucial. Involving local communities in the design process, creating inclusive public spaces, and promoting affordable housing can enhance social inclusion. Stimulating economic activity, supporting local businesses, and improving connectivity can drive economic opportunity. Finally, incorporating green infrastructure, using sustainable materials, and prioritizing energy efficiency can promote environmental sustainability.

How a Gateway Was Formed: Qur'an Gate of Shiraz

Shiraz, the capital of Fars province and the fourth most populated city in Iran, is located in the south of Iran. The complex of the Qur'an Gateway in Shiraz is known as the entrance of Shiraz. This gateway is located in the northeastern part of Shiraz near the Allah Akbar gorge, between Chehel Magham and Baba Kouhi mountains. It is on the way from Shiraz to Isfahan. In this complex, the access network for riding and walking is well located, making an enjoyable image from the entrance of a city.

In the past, when passengers approached urban areas after passing deserts and mountains, they felt excited upon seeing nearby farms and gardens. Such a sense was completed by reaching a gate. Regular barriers and gates determined the city's territory and how to enter the city. Before passengers saw the gates and barriers, they first noticed agricultural lands. They also saw the presence of some urban marginal actions, which indicated their approach to the cities (Habibi et al., 2019; Khalilian et al., 2021; Rahimzadeh & Ahari, 2022).

The Qur'an Gate's evolution has been influenced by various social and political factors. In the 11th and 12th century AD, Albuyeh dynasty chose Shiraz as his capital. The main structure of the city was formed during this period. During the Azod al-Dawleh period, this gate was built (Limbert, 2004; Manoukian, 2012). Until the end of the Qajar dynasty (from 1789 to 1925), the Qur'an gateway can be considered a durable naturality and changeable structure. The change in Shiraz's physical structures and population during the Qajar period was insignificant compared to the previous period. The city was centralized in the Bazar and Zand region. At the beginning of the last century, Shiraz was affected by modernization like other cities in Iran (Manoukian, 2002).

The changes in Shiraz started at the beginning of the reign of Pahlavi I, around 1926. During the Pahlavi era, the primary core of Shiraz changed from a traditional structure to a modern form. More than a hundred new neighborhoods were built. By 1956, the area of Shiraz was doubled compared to 1926, while the population of Shiraz reached 156,557 people. The Qur'an Gate had been standing until 1936. Reza Shah ordered to destroy it with dynamite for the development plan of the northern road of Shiraz. The increasing number of cars, especially trucks and buses, made the narrow and dangerous gate a traffic hazard (Kooros, 1963; Manoukian, 2002). However, it was rebuilt again by the people of Shiraz in 1949.

The Qur'an Gate's destruction and subsequent reconstruction reflect the changing priorities of urban development and the interplay between cultural heritage and modernization. In the Pahlavi era, the emphasis was on modernizing the city and improving infrastructure, leading to the gate's demolition. However, the public's strong attachment to the historical landmark resulted in its rebuilding, demonstrating the importance of cultural heritage in shaping urban identity.

The next period of changes in the entrance of Shiraz co-occur with the second Pahlavi period, the era when Shiraz experienced rapid growth in sync with other cities of Iran. Between 1956 and 1966, the area of the city tripled from its 1926 area. This rapid development and growth may be due to several factors. These include the establishment of academic and administrative centers, military bases, a rise in immigration, and natural population growth. According to the General Population and Housing Census of Iran in November 1966, the population of Shiraz reached 270,000 people. After half a century, the city's population grew slowly at first (about 2% per year from 1922 to 1956). Then, it increased faster (approximately 4/7% from 1956 to 1966). Therefore, the population of Shiraz increased fivefold in 50 years. According to nationalist strategies in the Pahlavi II era, Shiraz became important. Therefore, during this period, Shiraz was considered as the cultural capital of the Iran. All these events caused a dramatic increase in the number of tourists to this city. In 1972, Shiraz's first comprehensive plan was made. Inspired by the past, the Qur'an gateway was rebuilt, although there were some differences. It had larger dimensions, a rectangular room above it for the Qur'an, two small entrances on either side and an arched main opening. But the cars entering Shiraz still passed through the narrow and limited passage under the Qur'an Gate (Khalilian et al., 2021; Sadeghi et al., 2019).

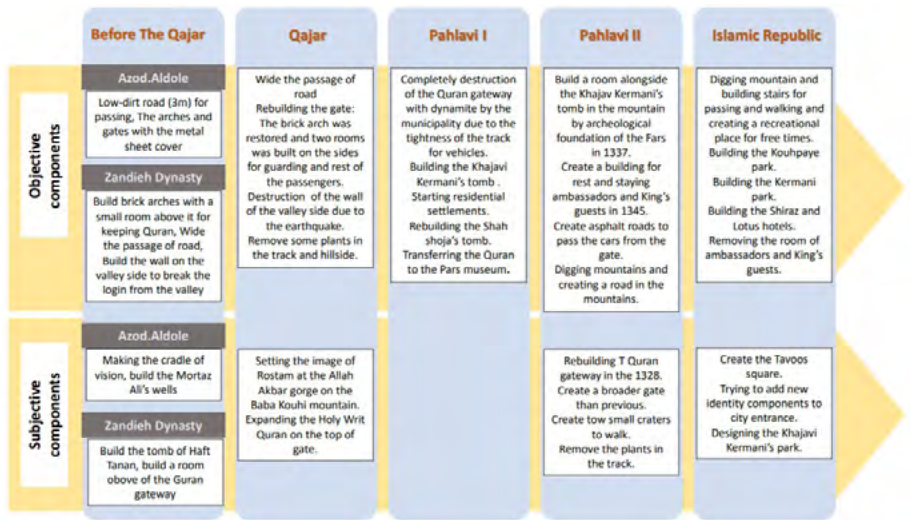
Fundamental changes have been made in the Islamic Republic era. During this period, Shiraz has faced a large population growth, witnessing a 5.34 growth between the years 1979 and 2020. It has reached 1.869 million people from 350 thousand people. Incoming tourists reached 11,500,000 from 1,200,000. The city developed more rapidly and in 2008, a new master plan was prepared for the city. Construction also increased by 80 percent compared to 1979.

The Qur'an Gate's transformation in the Islamic Republic era reflects the changing priorities of urban development and the impact of economic globalization. The city's rapid growth and increased tourism have led to significant changes in the surrounding area, including the development of commercial and recreational facilities. However, this development has also raised concerns about gentrification and displacement of local communities.

During this period, the amount of Shiraz green spaces decreased from 18 thousand hectares to 2,857 hectares. The gateway area turned into one of the great green spaces of Shiraz . Also, one of the most important interventions that took place in the area of the gateway was filling the channel. It poured the floodwaters of the valley into the river. The water channel was filled to widen the path. At the time, this measure did not take environmental considerations into account. This changed the natural bed of the area and caused problems in flood control. The further cutting off of the mountains widened the gate area and turned it into an urban edge (Kamanroodi Kojuri et al., 2020; Sabet Sarvestani et al., 2011).

Figure 1 shows transformations of the Qur'an Gate to a new gateway from the Qajar era until now in the objective and subjective categories.

Figure 1
The Theoretical Framework of the Research

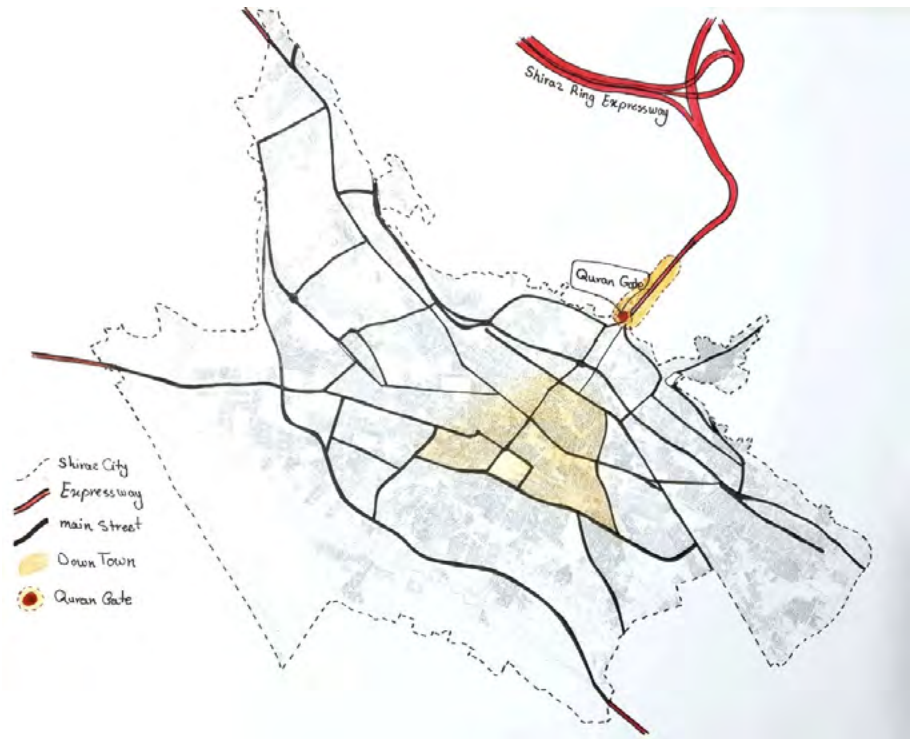


Note. Source: developed by the authors.

Since 1949, we can identify a process of forming a gateway at the edge of the city beyond its traditional gate meaning. As shown in Figure 2, in these years, the Qur'an Gate of Shiraz defined a threshold for the urban network. This gateway has made it possible to access the northern cities to Shiraz by the ring road. An east-west highway on North Main Boulevard terminates at this gateway. Then it distributes the traffic to different parts of the city. Three main ways have diverged from this threshold. The first, Jomhoori Eslami Boulevard, goes to the west of Shiraz. The second, Hjrjat Boulevard, reaches the center of the city. The third, Haft Tanan Boulevard, goes to the east. As a whole, Qur'an Gateway in Shiraz makes an entrance corridor and threshold from the ring road to the city.

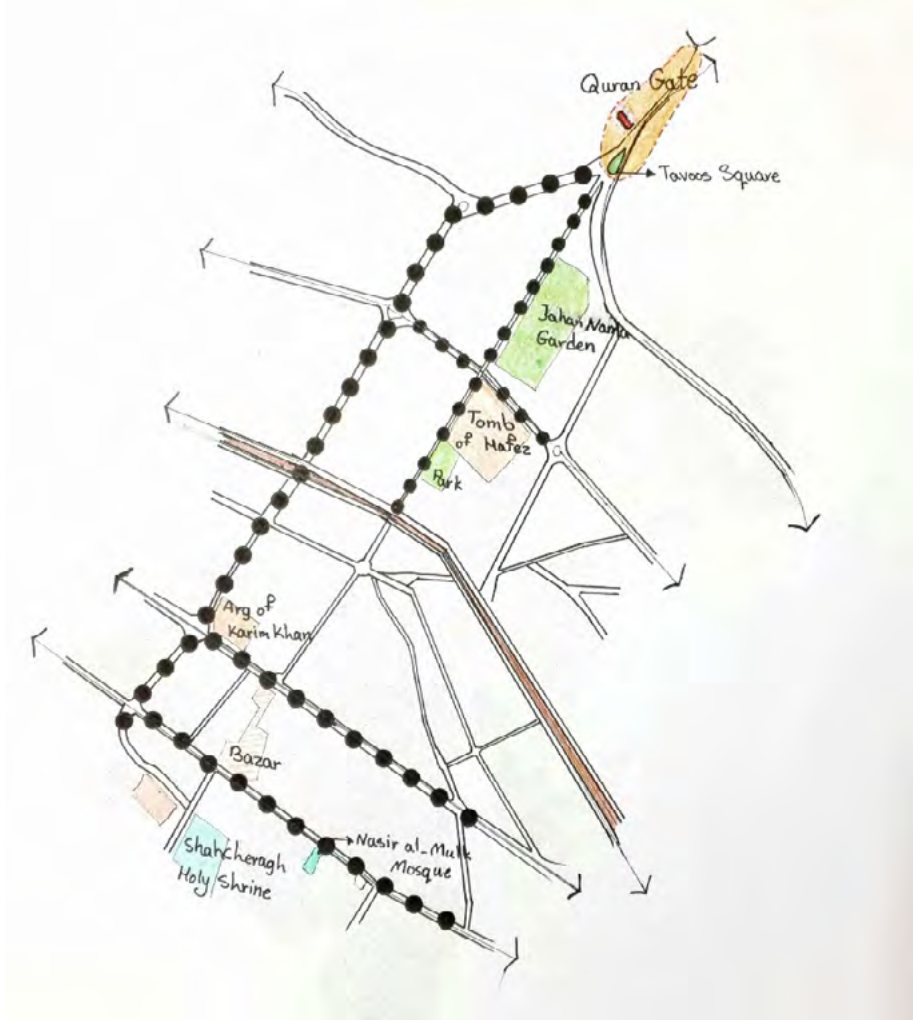
Figure 2

The Location of the Qur'an Gateway in Shiraz in Shiraz Urban Area



Note. Source: developed by the authors.

As shown in Figure 3, the spatial structure of the Qur'an Gateway is shown towards the city center. There is an easy access from the Qur'an Gateway to the central part of Shiraz by Hejrjat Boulevard. It just takes about 10 minutes from Tavoos Square to downtown. Important historical and tourist places are located on this path. Accessibility is one of the most important elements of spatial quality in the Qur'an Gateway. It is along with the other features.

Figure 3*The Spatial Structure of the Qur'an Gateway in Shiraz*

Note. Source: developed by the authors.

As shown in Figures 4 and 5, the Qur'an Square was made with the building of a large two-way boulevard. It hosted instruments made in the shape of a peacock whose tail was formed by colorful flowers. The peacock was recognized as the symbol of Shiraz. The zone of Qur'an Gateway is one of the tourist recreation parts of Shiraz, which has different functions inside itself. As the years passed, commercial, recreational, and service uses were joined to this area. Qur'an Gate turned into a recreational and commercial area on an edge at Shiraz's entrance, forming one of

the main urban nodes. It was a sign at the entrance, a park at a highway intersection, or an entrance corridor to a city. This was with a certain sequence of indications, lighting, landscaping, and shopping malls. The Shiraz grand hotel is located near this gate too. This made the new gate a multifunctional space on the edge of the main road. Despite the functional diversity and multi-scale places of this space, there is still harmony and unity in this place.

Figure 4
The Multifunctional Space of the Qur'an Gateway on the Urban Edge



Note. Source: developed by the authors.

Figure 5
From a Gate to a Gateway at the Urban Edge



Note. Source: developed by the authors.

The Conceptualization of Urban Gateway: An Inclusive Perspective

Conceptualizing urban gateways requires a systematic approach to break down data into its constituent components. However, traditional approaches often overlook the social, cultural, and environmental dimensions of these critical urban spaces. By integrating principles of inclusive urbanism, we can redefine urban gateways as dynamic and equitable elements within the urban fabric.

Previous research on urban gateways has primarily focused on their physical form and functional role. While these aspects are important, a more holistic understanding requires consideration of the following:

Social and Cultural Significance: Urban gateways can serve as powerful symbols of identity, community, and cultural exchange. They can foster social cohesion, promote diversity, and create a sense of belonging.

Spatial Justice and Equity: Gateways should be designed to be accessible and inclusive for all, regardless of age, ability, or socioeconomic status. They should connect people to opportunities, services, and green spaces.

Environmental Sustainability: Gateways can play a crucial role in promoting sustainable urban development by incorporating green infrastructure, reducing carbon emissions, and enhancing biodiversity.

Economic Development: Well-designed gateways can stimulate economic activity, attract investment, and create jobs.

To better understand the multifaceted role of urban gateways, we propose a revised framework that incorporates inclusive urbanism principles:

- **Social Dimension:** The social and cultural significance of the gateway, including its role in community building, identity formation, and social inclusion including:
 - Community engagement and participation;
 - Social inclusion and equity;
 - Cultural identity and heritage.
- **Spatial Configuration Dimension:** The physical arrangement and layout of the gateway, including its location, size, and connectivity to the surrounding urban fabric including:
 - Physical accessibility and mobility;
 - Public space quality and design;
 - Urban form and connectivity.
- **Functional Dimension:** The purposes and uses of the gateway, such as transportation, commercial activities, or cultural events, including:
 - Transportation and logistics;
 - Commercial activities and retail;
 - Cultural and recreational uses.
- **Environmental Dimension:** The environmental impact of the gateway, including its contribution to green spaces, biodiversity, and climate resilience, including:
 - Green infrastructure and biodiversity;
 - Climate resilience and adaptation;
 - Sustainable materials and construction practices.
- **Perceptual Dimension:** The public's perception of the gateway, including its aesthetic appeal, symbolism, and overall image, including:
 - Aesthetics and visual identity;
 - Wayfinding and signage;
 - Public perception and branding.

By analyzing urban gateways through this expanded framework, policymakers and urban planners can develop more effective strategies to create inclusive, resilient, and sustainable cities.

Social Dimension

Urban gateways are not merely physical structures but also significant social and cultural spaces. Their role in community building, identity formation, and social inclusion is essential to creating vibrant and equitable cities. Given the strong connection between urban edges and gateways, planners can explore how gateways can contribute to:

Social equity: By promoting inclusive and accessible urban spaces that accommodate the needs of diverse populations.

Community building: By fostering connections between different groups and promoting social cohesion through shared experiences and activities.

Economic development: By supporting local businesses and creating jobs in the gateway area, contributing to the overall economic vitality of the city.

Environmental sustainability: By incorporating ecological considerations into gateway design and planning, such as providing green spaces, promoting sustainable transportation, and reducing environmental impact.

Gateways are public spaces that support social contact and gathering, similar to town squares or parks. They are physical places where people come together to interact, socialize, and participate in community activities. As shown in Table 1, the social category can be divided into social space and social activity. Social space refers to the physical characteristics of the gateway, including its accessibility, safety, and design features that encourage social interaction.

Social activity refers to the types of activities that take place within the gateway, such as cultural events, festivals, or informal gatherings. Factors such as sociability, universality of space, and security are related to the social space of a gateway. A gateway that is accessible to all, safe, and welcoming is more likely to attract and retain visitors. Social activities in a gateway are connected to stimulus activity and the presence of mixed land use. A gateway with a variety of activities and land uses, such as shops, restaurants, and cultural attractions, is more likely to be a vibrant and attractive destination. By understanding the social and cultural dimensions of urban gateways, planners can create more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable cities.

Table 1
The Social Dimension of Redefining a Gateway

Category	Sub-Category	Component	Codes
Social	Social space	Sociability	Making it possible for everyone to socialize and gather for events
		Spatialization	Creating spatial forms where social activities and material objects, phenomena or processes are located at the threshold and making a general sense of social space typical of culture, place and time Inclusivity of an urban gateway
		Security	The possibility of being within the city gateway for everyone (being safe from danger and fear and having peace)
	Social activity	Stimulus activity	Encouraging and persuading services to increase people's presence
		Mixed land use	Proximity to various uses, including recreational and green spaces or commercial complexes for the presence of different groups

Spatial Configuration Dimension

Urban gateways are not merely physical structures but significant spatial markers that shape the character and identity of a city. A well-designed gateway can integrate seamlessly with the surrounding urban fabric, create thresholds, provide access to different areas, and be permeable to various modes of transportation. The spatial configuration of Shiraz, centered around the Qur'an Gate, demonstrates a clear sense of order and coherence. The physical structure of the movement system and access networks is well-organized, facilitating efficient movement and accessibility. The connection of elements with similar scales in the realms of state, religion, and the bazaar creates a cohesive texture. The spatial and physical diversity provided by openings, belts, squares, highways, and main streets and passages enhances the city's character and vitality. The hierarchical structure of roads and multi-purpose urban uses is significant in ensuring efficient transportation and accessibility. It allows people to reach their destinations without experiencing excessive traffic congestion or feeling disconnected. The historical presence of the Qur'an Gate at the main entrance of the city, along with nearby landmarks like the tombs of Khajovi Kermani and Tavus Square, and the presence of large commercial and recreational spaces, create an open and inclusive spatial system at the city's edge. This benefits not only passengers but also residents and visitors. As shown in Table 2, content analysis reveals two subcategories in the spatial configuration of a gateway: spatial relations and access network. Spatial relations include spatial integration, spatial opening, and permeability. A well-designed gateway should integrate seamlessly with the surrounding urban fabric, provide access to different areas, and be permeable to various types of movement. Access network includes accessibility, reliability, and safety. A gateway should be easily accessible to all, provide reliable transportation options, and prioritize safety for pedestrians and cyclists.

By considering these spatial dimensions, planners can ensure that urban gateways contribute positively to the social, economic, and cultural vitality of a city. Well-designed gateways can promote inclusivity, accessibility, and a sense of community, while also enhancing the city's overall attractiveness and livability.

Table 2
Spatial Configuration Dimension of Redefining a Gateway

Category	Sub-Category	Component	Codes
Spatial configuration	Spatial Relationship (Point, line, surface, and volume)	Spatial integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Making some urban nodes on the edge of the city as an interface between outside and inside the city• The establishment of ties with the core areas and its surrounding• A connector domain between city and urban, regional or global networks• Continuing the main structure from the inside to the outside of the city and vice versa• Forming some articulations around the city

Table 2 Continued

Category	Sub-Category	Component	Codes
Spatial configuration	Spatial Relationship (Point, line, surface, and volume)	Spatial opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The physical changes in the spatial structure of the Gateway in the framework of an open spatial system instead of its historically closed spatial system• Adopting the volume with the path at the threshold of the city entrance• Define thresholds on the urban edge
		Permeability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The transformation of the gate concept from an inflexible form to a gateway with a flexible and dynamic vast spatial entity.• Widen the main roads (less enclosed), more direct and with more diverse uses• Strengthening urban decentralization and open spatial system
	Access Network	Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continuity of the path from inside the city to its gateway• Easy access by belts, main roads and high ways• Important Nodes on the crossing of belts and highways with easy access• Locating at the joint of belts and main axes• Suitable access to various routes in the city
		Walkability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Considering pedestrians and their needs in path design• Continuity and sequence of the paths (pedestrian and rider) in the wall, ceiling, and floor• Space making of paths (pedestrian and rider)• Continuity of the path (walk and ride) from inside the city to its surroundings
		Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attention to the safety of pedestrians and drivers at the city gateway

Function Dimension

The functional index of urban gateways encompasses a range of activities and uses, including traffic management, infrastructure development, land use planning, and economic development. However, a truly inclusive gateway should prioritize the needs and experiences of all users, regardless of their age, ability, income, or background. Gateways should feature a diverse mix of uses, such as commercial, residential, cultural, and recreational activities. This diversity not only contributes to their visual appeal, dynamism, and vibrancy but also provides visitors and residents with a variety of choices and opportunities.

Gateways should serve as inclusive spaces that facilitate rather than limit activities. They are thresholds where different land uses and activities converge, creating a dynamic and sociable space that is accessible to all.

Table 3 outlines two sub-categories: land use and activity and facility and utility. Land use and activity components should prioritize compatibility, efficiency, flexibility, and diversity. A well-functioning gateway should have a mix of land uses that are compatible, efficient, flexible, and diverse, and that cater to the needs of the local community. Facility and utility components refer to the physical infrastructure and services that support the gateway’s functions, such as transportation networks, public amenities, and utilities. These should be designed and maintained to be accessible to all users, including people with disabilities. By considering these functional dimensions and prioritizing inclusive design principles, planners can ensure that urban gateways are not only efficient and well-connected but also contribute to the social, economic, and cultural vitality of the city.

Table 3
Function Dimension of Redefining a Gateway

Category	Sub-Category	Component	Codes
Functional	Land use and activity	Compatibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Compatible Land uses with the city gateway space• No interference between land uses with each other
		Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Activities and services provided are close to the people• Satisfaction with the way the service is provided
		Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The open spaces with a larger scale next to the crossings create spaces for spending leisure time in the surrounding of the city• Variable and flexible land uses with different uses
		Variety of land use	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The presence of mixed uses and multiplicity of uses in the thresholds of the city and 24h services• Placing the important land uses in the gateway (service complexes, chain store branches, main terminals, main train station, and international airports)• Making a suitable space on the thresholds of the city to hold religious and ritual ceremonies• The existence of various services• Protected recreational and green spaces
	Facilities and utilities	Consolidation and retrofitting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The justifiable quality and stability of superstructure and infrastructure (surface water disposal, street pavement, etc.)• Use of pavements, vegetation, stairs, and level differences
		Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Highlighting access nodes by deploying appropriate facilities and utilities

Environment Dimension

The environmental dimension of urban gateways encompasses concepts related to livability, climatic comfort, environmental integrity, and natural richness (Table 4). These factors are essential for creating sustainable and healthy urban environments.

Climatic comfort refers to the pleasantness of the climate, influenced by factors such as temperature, humidity, wind, radiation flow, and air pressure. A well-designed gateway should mitigate the negative effects of the climate, such as excessive heat or cold, and provide comfortable outdoor spaces. This can be achieved through strategies like shading devices, green roofs, and cool paving materials.

Beyond climatic comfort, a holistic approach to environmental sustainability is essential for creating truly sustainable and resilient urban gateways. Key considerations include:

- **Livability:** Gateways should be designed to prioritize the health and well-being of residents and visitors. This includes providing access to green spaces, parks, and recreational facilities.
- **Environmental Integrity:** Preserving natural ecosystems and biodiversity is crucial. This can be achieved through measures such as habitat restoration, pollution control, and sustainable land use practices.
- **Natural Richness:** Incorporating natural elements, such as trees, water bodies, and green roofs, can enhance the aesthetic appeal and ecological value of the gateway.

By prioritizing these environmental considerations in the design and development of urban gateways, planners can create spaces that are not only sustainable but also contribute to the overall health and well-being of the community.

Table 4
Environment Dimension of Redefining a Gateway

Category	Sub-Category	Component	Codes
Environment	Water, soil and air	Greenness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gateway can be a part of the green belt strategy• Sufficient green space and vegetation at the gateway area
		Eco-friendliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gateway as part of eco- sustainable urban strategies• Connection between the artifacts and natural elements in gateway area
		Climate adaption	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Climate-friendly design
		Basin and catchment area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Control of runoff in the area of the gateway
		Unpolluted and clean air	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The flow and blowing of unpolluted and clean air

Perceptual Dimension

The perceptual dimension of urban gateways is crucial in shaping their identity, character, and overall appeal. A well-designed gateway can create a lasting impression on visitors, fostering a sense of place and belonging. By considering factors such as visual appeal, auditory experience, and olfactory sensations, we can create gateways that are not only functional but also emotionally engaging.

Clear signage, wayfinding systems, and iconic landmarks can enhance the gateway’s legibility and memorability. Public spaces, cultural activities, and local businesses can contribute to the gateway’s social and economic vitality. The incorporation of natural elements, such as trees, water bodies, and green spaces, can enhance the gateway’s aesthetic appeal and ecological value. Additionally, the careful design of man-made elements, such as buildings, plazas, and streets, can create a sense of order, hierarchy, and visual interest.

By prioritizing the perceptual dimension of urban gateways, we can create spaces that are not only functional but also inspiring and memorable. Through careful planning and design, we can transform urban gateways into vibrant and inclusive destinations that enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors alike. Table 5 summarizes these components of perceptual dimension.

Table 5
Perceptual Dimension of Redefining a Gateway

Category	Sub-Category	Component	Codes
Perceptual	Mental image	Legibility	The legibility of the physical and visual connection of the main route, squares, and when entering and leaving the city Easy and fast routing and navigation
		Memorability	Using historical monuments in an urban gateway and interfacing it to the new forms Using symbolic elements with visual sequence and making scales on the way of movement
		Imageability	Creating memorable images of the atmosphere of the city gate in people’s minds Use of special symbolic forms
		Distinction	The city gate is different from the outside and inside of the city, as well as the gate of other cities Discerning the entrances implicitly within the gateway
	Natural and human-made landscape	To be eye-catching	Using symbolic elements with visual sequence and creating appropriate scales and colors in the man-made landscape A great view of the city A proper view of the city’s scene and, if possible, making it possible to view mountains, forests, rivers, and so on

Table 5 Continued

Category	Sub-Category	Component	Codes
Perceptual	Natural and human-made landscape	Lightness	Providing suitable lighting for the night view of the city gate Simultaneous use of light and shadow
		Variety along with order	Creating the contrast in the path (by changing the rhythm and form) Attention to viewing angle and eye movement Using dynamic elements and signs Making various facades using the forms consistent with performance Variety in size, patterns, structures
		Contextualism	Attention to environmental conditions in the design of surfaces and spaces
	Morphological	Topography	Conforming the gateway and its path with topography (natural and artificial) Defining the gateway in the form of a panoramic urban landscape Enhancing visibility and scenery to one or more elements of natural landmarks (such as mountains, rivers, gardens, etc.) or elements of artificial landmarks (such as religious monuments, historical monuments, and important streets, etc.)
		Continuity in the form	Circulation and orientation in space Using the human scale The relationship between parts and patterns in such a way each part continues another one

Conclusion

The concept of the urban gateway needs to be redefined in light of contemporary urbanization patterns. While traditional gates were significant in the past, modern gateways are evolving to meet the changing needs and priorities of cities. The new discourse around gateways introduces an open spatial system, contrasting with the closed systems of the past. A gateway can be defined as a threshold that manifests as a territory, region, or urban strip, adapting itself to the contemporary dynamics of cities. In this context, the threshold serves as a starting point rather than a restriction. By returning to its symbolic meanings, it becomes a sort of interface.

Implementing the urban gateway concept demonstrates that controlling the domain of sovereignty does not necessarily require a closed spatial regime. Embracing the idea that fluidity is at the heart of the urban gateway signifies an open spatial system that promotes decentralization. Urban gateways can continuously redefine their roles based on spatial performance settings, which are both projective and topological.

To leverage urban gateways as catalysts for urban development and enhance the quality of life, a comprehensive approach is essential. These gateways can

contribute to a strong urban identity and a sense of place. By strategically designing and implementing gateway projects, cities can transform these spaces into vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable destinations.

One of the key advantages of urban gateways is their potential to tackle social equity and mitigate urban inequality. By creating inclusive and accessible public spaces, gateways can help dismantle social barriers and promote greater integration among diverse communities. They can also foster economic development and job creation, particularly in marginalized areas. Furthermore, gateways can play a vital role in improving the quality of life in urban edge areas. By providing amenities, services, and connectivity, they can revitalize often-neglected spaces, making them more appealing places to live and work.

Key strategies to maximize the impact of urban gateways include:

- **Prioritizing Inclusive Design:** Ensuring accessibility for all people and considering the diverse needs of user groups to promote inclusivity.
- **Fostering Community Engagement:** Involving local communities in the planning and design process to cultivate a sense of ownership, organizing community events, and supporting local businesses to boost the gateway's social and economic vitality.
- **Stimulating Economic Development:** Attracting investment, creating jobs, and promoting tourism by developing attractive and accessible spaces.
- **Enhancing Environmental Sustainability:** Incorporating green infrastructure, promoting sustainable transportation, and reducing energy consumption to establish environmentally friendly gateways.
- **Improving Public Spaces:** Creating high-quality public spaces that are safe, inviting, and accessible to all.

By implementing these strategies, cities can fully harness the potential of urban gateways to achieve a variety of benefits. Gateways can foster social inclusion by creating public spaces that are accessible and encouraging community engagement. They can stimulate economic development by attracting investment, supporting local businesses, and promoting tourism. Additionally, gateways can promote environmental sustainability by integrating green infrastructure and encouraging sustainable transportation.

By adopting a holistic approach that considers the social, economic, and environmental aspects of these spaces, cities can create vibrant and sustainable urban environments. Policymakers must integrate gateways into urban planning policies and implement sustainable development strategies.

Some key recommendations for policymakers include:

- **Formulating urban gateway initiatives as part of urban growth and development plans.**
- **Prioritizing social equity, community building, economic development, and environmental sustainability in gateway design and implementation.**
- **Integrating gateways into the urban network to enhance connectivity and accessibility.**

- Promoting sustainable development practices in gateway areas, including green infrastructure, renewable energy, and sustainable transportation.
- Investing in research and development to explore innovative approaches to urban gateway design and management.

By adopting these recommendations, policymakers can unlock the full potential of urban gateways, leading to more sustainable, equitable, and vibrant cities.

The research may have been limited by factors such as a small sample size, regional focus, data limitations, the subjectivity of perception, changing urban dynamics, a lack of comparative analysis, and the lack of distinction between the concept of an urban gate and a gateway among urban development planners. These limitations could affect the generalizability of the findings and the ability to draw broader conclusions.

Future research on urban gateways can contribute to a deeper understanding of their role in shaping sustainable and equitable cities. Researchers can identify best practices, assess effectiveness, and explore innovative approaches by conducting comparative studies, longitudinal analysis, case studies, quantitative research, and interdisciplinary collaborations. Additionally, involving citizens in the planning and evaluation of gateways can ensure that they meet community needs. Analyzing existing policies and developing guidelines can also support sustainable urban growth. Finally, exploring the potential of new technologies can enhance the functionality and sustainability of urban gateways.

References

- Abdullah, M. N. (2022). Assessment of urban entrances in the city of Samawa. *Specialusis Ugdymas*, 2(43), 1538–1552. <http://www.sumc.lt/index.php/se/article/view/1480>
- Andersson, E., Tengö, M., McPhearson, T., & Kremer, P. (2015). Cultural ecosystem services as a gateway for improving urban sustainability. *Ecosystem Services*, 12, 165–168. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecoser.2014.08.002>
- Arefian, F. F., & Moeini, S. I. (Eds.). (2016). *Urban change in Iran: Stories of rooted histories and ever-accelerating developments*. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-26115-7>
- Bagheri, Y., & Mansouri, S.-A. (2018). Voroodi shahr, be-masaabeh 'onsori jahat eejaad hoviat-mostaghel baraaye manzhrshahri [City entrance, as an element for creating an independent identity for the city landscape]. *Bagh-e Nazar*, 15(60), 5–14. <https://doi.org/10.22034/bagh.2018.62760>
- Bangia, A. (1994). *A city's edge: Where the land meets water* [Master's thesis, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University]. VTechWorks. <http://hdl.handle.net/10919/53365>
- Burghardt, A. F. (1971). A hypothesis about gateway cities. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 61(2), 269–285. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8306.1971.tb00782.x>

Çalışkan, O. (2010). Urban gateway: Just a symbol, or more? (Reappraising an old idea in the case of Ankara). *Journal of Urban Design*, 15(1), 91–122. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13574800903424226>

Drisko, J. W., & Maschi, T. (2016). *Content analysis*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190215491.001.0001>

Ehlers, E., & Floor, W. (1993). Urban change in Iran, 1920–1941. *Iranian studies*, 26(3–4), 251–275. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00210869308701802>

Ferguson, M., Maoh, H., & Kanaroglou, P. (2012). Simulating sustainable urban gateway development: Illustration from Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. *Transportation Research Record*, 2269(1), 135–144. <https://doi.org/10.3141/2269-16>

Gallent, N., Andersson, J., & Bianconi, M. (2006). *Planning on the edge*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203099193>

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (2006). Theoretical sampling. In N. Denzin (Ed.), *Sociological methods: A sourcebook* (pp. 105–114). Routledge.

Gu, C. (2019). Urbanization: Processes and driving forces. *Science China Earth Sciences*, 62(9), 1351–1360. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11430-018-9359-y>

Habibi, K., Shieh, E., & Saidi, M. (2019). Sanjesh keifiathaaye mohiti dar darvazeh shahr va avalveytabnadi aanhaa ba estefaadeh az farayand tahlil shabakehaye [Assessing environmental qualities in the city gateway and prioritizing them by means of the analysis network process]. *Journal of Iranian Architecture & Urbanism*, 10(1), 5–23. <https://doi.org/10.30475/isau.2019.131418>

Hesse, M. (2010). Cities, material flows and the geography of spatial interaction: Urban places in the system of chains. *Global Networks*, 10(1), 75–91. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-0374.2010.00275.x>

Kamanroodi Kojuri, M., Ghalehtemouri, K. J., Janbazi, A., & Azizpour, F. (2020). Urban sprawl functional-structural changes in neighborhood settlements: Case of study Shiraz. *The Indonesian Journal of Geography*, 52(2), 260–268. <https://doi.org/10.22146/ijg.41303>

Khalilian, S., Zandieh, M., & Alehashemi, A. (2021). Dar jost-vajvey voroodi shiraaz, barresi taghiiraat manzar voroodi shahr shiraaz—darvazeh ghoraan—az pish az ghaajaar ta emrooz [In the search of Shiraz entry: Investigation of changes happened in Shiraz entry—Qur'an Gate—Landscape from pre-Qajar period to date]. *Manzar: The Iranian Scientific Journal of Landscape*, 13(57), 78–89. <https://doi.org/10.22034/manzar.2021.248100.2088>

Khairabadi, M. (2000). *Iranian cities: Formation and development*. Syracuse University Press.

Kooros, J. (1963). *Pahlavi University, Shiraz, Iran* [Master's thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology]. DSpace@MIT. <http://hdl.handle.net/1721.1/75620>

Kyngäs, H. (2020). Inductive content analysis. In H. Kyngäs, K. Mikkonen, & M. Kääriäinen (Eds.), *The application of content analysis in nursing science research* (pp. 13–21). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-30199-6_2

Limbert, J. (2004). *Shiraz in the age of Hafez: The glory of a medieval Persian city*. University of Washington Press.

Madanipour, A. (2003). Modernization and everyday life: Urban and rural change in Iran. In A. Mohammadi (Ed.), *Iran encountering globalization: Problems and prospects* (pp. 137–148). Routledge.

Madanipour, A. (2006a). Early modernization and the foundations of urban growth in Tehran. In S. Nasserli & A. Ahgari (Eds.), *Bauten im Laufe der Zeit* [Constructions over time] (pp. 95–114). VINI, TU-Berlin.

Madanipour, A. (2006b). Urban planning and development in Tehran. *Cities*, 23(6), 433–438. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2006.08.002>

Madanipour, A. (2011). Sustainable development, urban form, and megacity governance and planning in Tehran. In A. Sorensen & J. Okata (Eds.), *Megacities: Urban form, governance, and sustainability* (pp. 67–91). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-4-431-99267-7_4

Manoukian, S. (2002). *The city of knowledge: History and culture in contemporary Shiraz* [Master's thesis, University of Michigan]. The University of Michigan Library. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027.42/123569>

Manoukian, S. (2012). *City of knowledge in twentieth century Iran: Shiraz, history and poetry*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203802496>

Melville, A. (2015). *The gateway to the south: Enhancing connectivity between port and town* [Master's thesis, Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington]. Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington's Open Access Institutional Repository. <https://doi.org/10.26686/wgtn.17057918.v1>

Ni, P. (2013). The goal, path, and policy responses of China's new urbanization. *China Finance and Economic Review*, 1, Article 2. <https://doi.org/10.1186/2196-5633-1-2>

Pilehvar, A. A. (2021). Spatial-geographical analysis of urbanization in Iran. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 8, Article 63. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-021-00741-w>

Punter, J. (Ed.). (2009). *Urban design and the British urban renaissance*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203869208>

Rahimzadeh, P., & Ahari, Z. (2022). Darvazeh dar shahrhaaye sadeh-haaye nkhost eslaami iraan ('elmi pajhooheshi) [A study of city gates in early Islamic cities of Iran]. *Journal of Iranian Architecture Studies*, 9(17), 77–96. <https://doi.org/10.22052/9.17.77>

Rodrigue, J.-P. (2004). Freight, gateways and mega-urban regions: The logistical integration of the Bostwash corridor. *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, 95(2), 147–161. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0040-747X.2004.t01-1-00297.x>

Sabet Sarvestani, M. S., Ibrahim, A. L., & Kanaroglou, P. (2011). Three decades of urban growth in the city of Shiraz, Iran: A remote sensing and geographic information systems application. *Cities*, 28(4), 320–329. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2011.03.002>

Sabharwal, M., Levine, H., & D'Agostino, M. (2018). A conceptual content analysis of 75 years of diversity research in public administration. *Review of Public Personnel Administration*, 38(2), 248–267. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0734371X16671368>

Sadeghi, A. R., Khakzand, M., & Jangjoo, S. (2019). Historical analysis of the role of bazaar on the formation of Iranian Islamic urban forms; Case study: Shiraz, Iran. *Armanshahr Architecture & Urban Development*, 12(26), 89–101. <https://doi.org/10.22034/aaud.2019.89058>

Sarmiento, J., & Kazemi, Z. (2014). Hammams and the contemporary city: The case of Isfahan, Iran. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 20(2), 138–156. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2012.736873>

Scholvin, S. (2021). Analysing gateway cities at different scales: From global interlinking and regional development to urban branding. *Geography Compass*, 15(7), Article e12579. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12579>

Scholvin, S., Breul, M., & Diez, J. R. (2019). Revisiting gateway cities: Connecting hubs in global networks to their hinterlands. *Urban Geography*, 40(9), 1291–1309. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02723638.2019.1585137>

Shabani, E. A., & Kamyab, J. (2013). Siyasat shahri dar taarikh moaaser iraan (1299 – 1320 h.esh) ba takid bar fazaahaaye 'omoomi shahr tehraan [Urban politics in Iran's contemporary history (1921–1941) with an emphasis on public spaces of Tehran]. *Bagh-e Nazar*, 9(23), 83–92. https://www.bagh-sj.com/article_2458.html

Sharifi, A., & Murayama, A. (2013). Changes in the traditional urban form and the social sustainability of contemporary cities: A case study of Iranian cities. *Habitat International*, 38, 126–134. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.habitatint.2012.05.007>

Shibley, R. G., Brooks, B., Farbstein, J., & Wener, R. (2011). *Partnering strategies for the urban edge: 2011 Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence*. Bruner Foundation. <https://www.rudybruneraward.org/publications/partnering-strategies-urban-edge/>

Singer, A., Hardwick, S. W., & Brettell, C. B. (2008, April 30). *Twenty-first century gateways: Immigrants in suburban America*. Migration Policy Institute. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/twenty-first-century-gateways-immigrants-suburban-america>

van der Woude, A. M., de Vries, J., & Hayami, A. (1990). *Urbanization in history: A process of dynamic interactions*. Oxford University Press.

Woudsma, C. (2007). *Comparative analysis of urban planning and gateway development*. Academia.edu. https://www.academia.edu/55709119/Comparative_analysis_of_urban_planning_and_Gateway_development

Zaninović, T. (2022). Streets as heritage—"Historical gateway-pathways" and their transformation into urban streets. *Prostor*, 30(1), 134. <https://hrcak.srce.hr/279767>



ARTICLE

Factors Contributing to the Relatively Low Gender Gap in Entrepreneurship in Russia

Edgar Demetrio Tovar-García

Universidad Panamericana, Zapopan, México

ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurship is notably characterized by gender disparities, adversely impacting aggregate income and productivity. Accordingly, this study investigates the determinants of gender gaps in entrepreneurship in Russia, where the entrepreneurship gender gap, which is defined as the difference in entrepreneurial participation rates between men and women, is approximately 2%. Since the 2000s, this gap has remained relatively stable and is notably smaller than in many developed and developing countries. As such, the article highlights Russia's relatively strong performance in fostering inclusive entrepreneurship using data from the Russian Longitudinal Monitoring Survey, encompassing 197,699 observations from 33,889 individuals (55% women) between 2000 and 2019. Based on panel data regression models and incorporating a comprehensive set of independent variables, including age, education, health status, marital status, number of children, religious participation, physical exercise, trust, migration background, ethnicity, and residence in Moscow and Saint Petersburg. The findings reveal that participation in physical exercise and religious events significantly predicts entrepreneurial activity by gender, offering insights for reducing gender disparities in entrepreneurship. In contrast, traditional variables such as education, marital status, and number of children exhibit negligible effects. These results remain robust across different measures of entrepreneurship and hold when differentiating between necessity-driven and opportunity-driven entrepreneurship. Therefore, the findings suggest that Russia's experience in narrowing gender gaps in entrepreneurship may serve as a model for other countries.

KEYWORDS

gender gap, female entrepreneurship, religion, physical exercise, education, family roles, transition country

Introduction

The gender gap in entrepreneurship has received increasing attention in academic research and policy discussions due to its significant implications for economic development and social equality (Guzman & Kacperczyk, 2019; Li & Tong, 2023; Panda, 2018). As women continue to be underrepresented in entrepreneurial activities compared to men, understanding the determinants of these gender gaps is crucial for addressing barriers and promoting gender equality in the entrepreneurial landscape (Ilie et al., 2021; Rietveld & Patel, 2022).

Interestingly, in Russia, this gap is relatively low compared to many developed and developing countries. The ratio of male to female entrepreneurs shows a difference of about 2%, which is lower than in Italy (15%), Greece (10%), and Ireland (10%), with the Russian gap being similar to that of Germany (Cuberes et al., 2019). Overall, the evidence suggests that ex-socialist countries exhibit low rates of gender gaps (Cuberes et al., 2019; Dorjnyambuu, 2023). This relatively low gender gap in Russia is likely attributable to its socialist history, sociocultural background, policy framework, and labor legislation (Teplova, 2007); however, these and other contributing factors remain underexplored. Furthermore, this low gender gap often goes unacknowledged in the literature, perpetuating a narrative that portrays Russia as a predominantly patriarchal and anti-entrepreneurial country (Kvanina et al., 2020; Voronkova, 2019).

In this context, the present research focuses on Russia, aiming to gain deeper insights into the relatively strong performance of Russians in fostering inclusive entrepreneurial activities. Accordingly, this study's primary research question is: What are the key determinants of the entrepreneurship gender gap in Russia? Addressing this question is expected to enhance understanding and support for Russian gender policies while offering valuable insights for policymakers in other countries.

The key determinants of gender gaps in entrepreneurship can be hypothesized to involve a combination of individual characteristics, sociocultural norms, access to resources, financial constraints, institutional environments, labor legislation, and policy frameworks (Cuberes et al., 2019; Kvanina et al., 2020; Salis & Flegl, 2021; Thébaud, 2011). These factors interact in complex ways to shape the entrepreneurial ecosystem and contribute to gender disparities. Moreover, this intricate interplay poses significant challenges for empirical analysis, complicating efforts to identify the most critical explanatory variables.

A significant advantage of the current research is the use of panel data and econometric techniques, which enable the identification of a series of previously overlooked variables and provide evidence of the limited relevance of traditional explanatory variables. Therefore, the contributions of this article are threefold. First,

it represents the first robust quantitative study on the determinants of gender gaps in entrepreneurship in Russia. Second, it identifies two new variables—participation in religious events and participation in physical exercise—that have significant effects in predicting female entrepreneurship, not only in terms of self-employment but also regarding opportunity-based entrepreneurship. Third, the current research found evidence indicating the limited relevance of traditional explanatory variables such as education, marriage, and children.

The remainder of the article is organized as follows. The next section provides a brief literature review that establishes the theoretical background for the empirical strategy. Data section describes the dataset from the Russian Longitudinal Monitoring Survey (RLMS) and introduces the methodology, which primarily consists of logistic and random effects models. Then, the main results are presented, with the following discussion of these findings, emphasizing policy implications, limitations, and potential directions for future research. Finally, the article concludes.

Literature Review

Entrepreneurship serves as a crucial driver of innovation and economic growth, with its determinants broadly classified into macro- and micro-level factors. Macro-level factors encompass political, legal, economic, and cultural dimensions, whereas micro-level factors include individual attributes such as age, risk propensity, competitiveness, and personality traits (Tovar-García, 2022; Xie, 2014). Among these, gender disparities are particularly pronounced, positioning gender as a pivotal determinant in entrepreneurial endeavors (Cuberes et al., 2019; OECD, 2017, pp. 110–115). Extant research highlights that women encounter unique barriers, including limited access to financial resources, professional networks, and entrepreneurial opportunities, which impede their entrepreneurial advancement (Cuberes et al., 2019; Kvanina et al., 2020; Voronkova, 2019).

These gender disparities in entrepreneurship have tangible economic consequences, contributing to reduced income levels and aggregate productivity. For instance, in OECD countries, gender gaps in entrepreneurship are estimated to result in an average income loss of 6% (Cuberes & Teignier, 2016). The persistence of these disparities underscores the importance of examining the multifaceted factors that influence entrepreneurial intentions and outcomes, providing a foundation for addressing gender inequities in this domain.

As such, the main determinants of gender gaps in entrepreneurship can also be studied using the aforementioned categorization. For illustrative purposes, note that, at the macro level, there is a significant correlation between the unemployment rate (as an indicator of overall macroeconomic conditions) and self-employment, which can also be treated as entrepreneurship (Thurik et al., 2008). In several developing countries, self-employment represents a major opportunity for women, given the lack of opportunities in the labor market (Minniti & Naudé, 2010). However, self-employment is often linked to necessity-based entrepreneurship, which implies a low probability of success in various respects. That said, recent evidence suggests that closing

the gender gap in entrepreneurship requires more than just economic growth; it is essential to improve scores on the Human Development Index (Salis & Flegl, 2021).

Additionally, at the macro level, several sociocultural factors have been emphasized in the literature. Overall, the gap tends to decrease in individualistic, pragmatic, and risk-averse countries (Salis & Flegl, 2021). The policy recommendation is to diminish the perception of entrepreneurship as a masculine activity, i.e., promote practices of gender egalitarianism (Oyono & Ondoa, 2023). The evidence suggests that more gender-equal countries also exhibit a lower gender gap in opportunity-based entrepreneurship (Rietveld & Patel, 2022).

At the micro level, the literature highlights gender differences in competitiveness and risk-taking as key explanatory variables, with women being less competitively inclined and less willing to take risks (Bönte & Piegeler, 2013). Women are less likely to perceive themselves as capable of being entrepreneurs and hold themselves to a stricter standard of competence compared to men, which accounts for a significant portion of the gender gap in entrepreneurship (Thébaud, 2010). Gender differences in entrepreneurial propensity mainly stem from subjective perceptions, such as self-confidence in one's own skills and fear of failure, with women having a higher entrepreneurial propensity than men after accounting for differences in skill perception (Abbasiachavari & Block, 2022).

Recently, the Big Five personality traits¹ have been emphasized in the entrepreneurship literature; however, there are currently a lack of studies focusing specifically on gender gaps in entrepreneurship. Nonetheless, there is evidence suggesting that agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness particularly influence female entrepreneurial behavior (Rahman et al., 2023). The Big Five traits significantly differ by gender and are influenced by social context. Overall, women consistently score higher in agreeableness and neuroticism, with more mixed results for extraversion and openness, while men tend to exhibit higher levels of conscientiousness (Mishkevich & Shchebetenko, 2018; Taufik et al., 2019; Vianello et al., 2013).

Age is another individual characteristic that predicts entrepreneurship, with younger individuals being more likely to start their own businesses (Lévesque & Minniti, 2006). Entrepreneurial competencies tend to decrease as individuals age, and evidence suggests that particularly older women lag behind older men (Moore et al., 2021). However, in explaining these gaps, the literature places greater emphasis on other socio-demographic individual characteristics, such as education, marriage, and children. Although the social and economic contexts moderate their effects, these three variables traditionally account for an important share of the gender gap in entrepreneurship (Ajefu, 2019; Gawel & Krstić, 2021; Pereira & Manzo, 2024).

Although higher education does not guarantee entrepreneurial activity, opportunity-driven entrepreneurship often demands skills that are typically developed or indicated by educational attainment. Conversely, in developing countries, self-

¹ The Big Five personality traits are a widely used framework that categorizes human personality into five broad dimensions. Openness reflects intellectual curiosity and creativity, conscientiousness pertains to organization and goal orientation, extraversion encompasses sociability and assertiveness, agreeableness involves empathy and cooperation, and neuroticism refers to emotional stability.

employment tends to be necessity-driven, arising as a response to limited job opportunities in the labor market, which are often linked to low educational levels. By contrast, in Europe, gender disparities in education are mirrored in gender gaps in entrepreneurship (Gaweł & Krstić, 2021), highlighting the importance of promoting women's education to foster female entrepreneurial participation.

Both men and women are more likely to engage in business ownership when they are married, have children, or receive financial support from their spouses (Marshall & Flaig, 2014; Tundui & Tundui, 2021). However, societal norms often place married women, particularly those with children, in traditional roles that can conflict with the demands of starting and managing a business. In contrast, men are more commonly perceived as primary financial providers, allowing them to prioritize entrepreneurial endeavors without facing equivalent domestic responsibilities (Guo & Werner, 2016).

Entrepreneurship is also considered a flexible option for women striving to balance family obligations with professional aspirations. Nonetheless, marriage and children can exert both positive and negative influences on female entrepreneurship, contingent upon various factors and the complex interplay between gender roles, family dynamics, and entrepreneurial activities. Notably, family support emerges as a crucial determinant of success in these endeavors (Tundui & Tundui, 2021).

The Russian Context

In the Russian context, the comparatively low entrepreneurship gender gap offers a unique case for analysis. Kvanina et al. (2020) highlight policies at federal and regional levels that promote women's business initiatives, addressing challenges such as limited access to financing, societal stereotypes, and insufficient networking opportunities. While these challenges are common globally, Russia's relatively strong performance in this area—supported by findings from this research—calls into question their relevance in all countries and indicates that other nations might derive insights from the Russian experience.

It is well known that ex-socialist countries were more egalitarian than many developed countries, and the Soviet past continues to influence the gender gaps in entrepreneurship (Teplova, 2007), partially explaining its relatively good performance. For example, March 8th is celebrated as a joyful day in Russia, whereas in many Western countries it is not always so. Therefore, the sociocultural background plays a significant role in the Russian context. However, recent evidence indicates that other factors could also play an important role.

Russia's persistently low fertility rate (around 1.2 in the 2000s) has prompted the introduction of various policies to increase birth rates, including maternity capital, parental leave, and housing and educational programs (Vakulenko et al., 2023). While these measures have failed to boost fertility, they have provided significant support to women. For example, parental leave policies in Russia allow mothers to spend up to three years with state-supported income while retaining job security (Bagirova & Blednova, 2022). Moreover, the scheduling of kindergartens and schools accommodates women's labor market participation (Bodrova & Yudina, 2018; Kolesnik

et al., 2021), and evidence suggests that male spouses may actively support women's entrepreneurial efforts (Tereshina, 2023). Consequently, a small number of children, combined with support from family, society, and the state, may diminish the significance of marriage and motherhood as factors contributing to the entrepreneurship gender gap in Russia.

Another factor to consider is the higher educational attainment of professionally employed women compared to their male counterparts. That is, women within the workforce are generally more educated. This discrepancy may suggest an underutilization of female entrepreneurial potential, hindering women from fully leveraging their qualifications and achieving optimal job alignment (Baskakova & Soboleva, 2017). By contrast, this observation could also imply that the educational gap already helped close the entrepreneurship gap.

Religion also exerts a significant influence on entrepreneurship (Audretsch et al., 2007; Tamzini & Salem, 2020). Recently, Tovar-García (2022) found that in Russia participation in religious events increases the probability of becoming an entrepreneur, serving as a means to obtain social capital and networking opportunities. This finding aligns with prior research signaling that religious communities provide critical support networks, offering financial resources, mentorship, and social capital (Deller et al., 2018; Lewis et al., 2013), which should be particularly beneficial for women and novice entrepreneurs. Furthermore, religious teachings support ethical values like honesty, hard work, and perseverance, and shape attitudes toward risk and innovation, which are advantageous for entrepreneurial success (Audretsch et al., 2007; Tamzini & Salem, 2020).

In Russia, religious affiliation is influenced by its Soviet heritage, with most citizens identifying as Orthodox Christians, alongside a significant minority identifying as Muslims. Currently, there is strong support and a solid relationship between the state and the Russian Orthodox Church (Stepanova, 2018). While religious participation, rather than belief alone, is associated with entrepreneurial activity (Tovar-García, 2022), it should be expected that religion contributes to gender gaps in entrepreneurship, as weakly suggested by recent literature, where it seems that male entrepreneurs disproportionately benefit from religious participation (Tovar-García, 2022).

In another area of literature, it has been noted that engaging in sports and physical exercise extends its influence beyond health and physical appearance, significantly impacting educational, labor market, and entrepreneurial outcomes (Lechner, 2009; Pfeifer & Cornelißen, 2010). Sports promote physical and mental well-being, enhance cognitive and non-cognitive skills, and foster social capital, all of which indirectly influence entrepreneurship (Moustakas & Reynard, 2023; Pervun et al., 2024). Specifically, four key mechanisms explain this relationship (Tovar-García, 2023). First, regular physical activity improves health, thus increasing risk tolerance and competitiveness, both crucial for entrepreneurship. Second, sports develop cognitive and non-cognitive skills, and as a result, support overall educational outcomes, which are essential for entrepreneurial success. Third, sports participation shapes personality traits like emotional stability, conscientiousness,

and extraversion, often linked to successful entrepreneurship. Finally, sports foster social networks and relationships, providing resources and opportunities beneficial for new ventures.

In the Russian context, there is evidence highlighting the positive association between sports participation and health, educational achievements, and income levels (Kaneva et al., 2024; Tovar-García, 2018, 2021a, 2021b). Specifically, engaging in athletic and combat sports increases students' academic performance (Tovar-García, 2017, 2018) and provides a wage premium of 6% to 10% for active individuals compared to their sedentary peers (Tovar-García, 2021b). These findings align with the Russian state program "Razvitie fizicheskoi kul'tury i sporta" [Development of Physical Culture and Sports], which aims to enhance mass participation and elite sports development (Aliev, 2022). Together, improved health, education, personality traits, and social capital resulting from sports participation create pathways that increase the likelihood of entrepreneurial pursuits, potentially contributing to a better understanding of gender disparities in entrepreneurship. Indeed, some findings suggest that women participating in sports may increase their competitive preferences; thus, a lack of risk aversion can be understood as competitiveness, which supports female entrepreneurship (Comeig et al., 2016).

Accordingly, the current research focuses on these recent findings in the pursuit of a better understanding of the low entrepreneurship gender gap in Russia.

Data

Data are sourced from the Russian Longitudinal Monitoring Survey—Higher School of Economics (n.d.). The RLMS is a nationally representative survey that collects information to monitor the effects of Russian reforms on the health and economic welfare of households and individuals. The survey is a publicly available source of data, and it has been described in detail elsewhere (Kozyreva et al., 2016). This research uses 20 waves over the years 2000–2019, including adults between 18 and 60 years old at the year of the corresponding survey year, consisting of 197,699 observations from 33,889 individuals (55% are women). The COVID-19 years and the years of the special military operation in Ukraine are omitted to avoid outliers. For all variables, non-responses were removed from the analysis.

Dependent Variables

Following Tovar-García (2022), two questions from the RLMS survey are used. First, the participants were asked, "Are you personally an owner or co-owner of the enterprise where you work?" Second, "In your opinion, are you doing entrepreneurial work at this job?" Positive answers were coded 1 and 0 otherwise, building the dummy variables Owner (full sample 4%, males 5%, females 3%) and Entrepreneur (full sample 5%, males 6%, females 4%). In addition, individuals with positive answers in both questions were coded 1, building the dummy Owner & Entrepreneur (full sample 2%, males 3%, females 1%). Then, these dummies are multiplied by the firm size, given the responses to the question "How many people

work in your enterprise? If you don't know exactly, estimate". This procedure gives continuous variables of entrepreneurship: Owner–Continuous ($M = 46.1$; $SD = 1113$), Entrepreneur–Continuous ($M = 11.1$; $SD = 572$), Owner & Entrepreneur–Continuous ($M = 1.8$; $SD = 86$). Assuming that the self-employed individuals work alone or with few employees, the continuous variables better control for the distinction between necessity-based and opportunity-based entrepreneurship. In addition, these variables are entered in logarithms to linearize and analyze percentage changes in the regression models.

Table 1 shows basic descriptive statistics. Note that, in all cases, the gender gap is statistically significant. In addition, these figures are similar to those reported by Cuberes et al. (2019), who estimated the entrepreneurship gender gap in Russia to be around 2%.

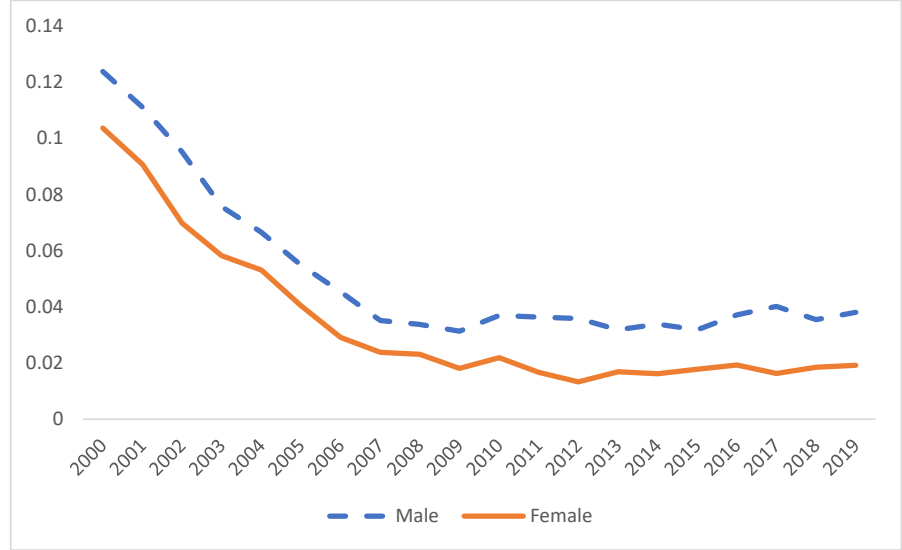
Table 1
Entrepreneurship by Gender

	Full sample					Male					Female				
	Obs.	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max	Obs.	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max	Obs.	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max
Male	197,699	0.45	0.50	0	1	89,286	1	0	1	1	108,413	0	0	0	0
Owner	127,442	0.04	0.19	0	1	58,700	0.05	0.21	0	1	68,742	0.03	0.17	0	1
Owner–Continuous	93,200	46.07	1112.94	0	120,000	40,081	55.38	1204.15	0	120,000	53,119	39.05	1038.78	0	100,000
Entrepreneur	126,732	0.05	0.21	0	1	58,375	0.06	0.23	0	1	68,357	0.04	0.19	0	1
Entrepreneur–Continuous	92,697	11.11	571.75	0	150,000	39,866	16.99	813.77	0	1,50000	52,831	6.67	271.69	0	50,000
Owner & Entrepreneur	126,357	0.02	0.14	0	1	58,161	0.03	0.16	0	1	68,196	0.01	0.11	0	1
Owner & Entrepreneur–Continuous	92,477	1.80	86.45	0	9,999	39,753	2.64	92.23	0	7,500	52,724	1.17	81.82	0	9,999

Note. The *t*-tests indicate statistically different means at the 1% level in all variables.

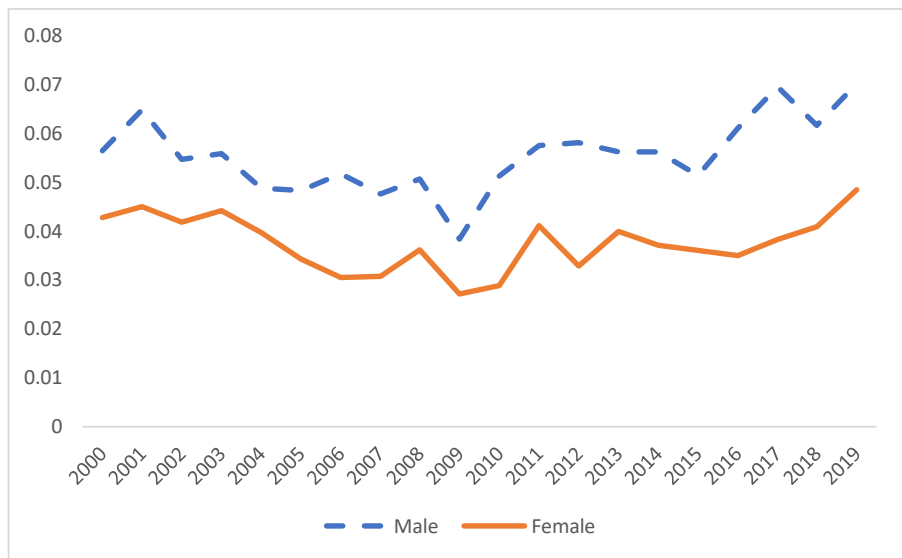
Figures 1–3 show the behavior of these gender gaps over the years 2000–2019. At the beginning of this century, around 10% of the Russians in the sample reported being owners, possibly as a result of the economic crisis of 1998. However, this percentage decreased over the 2010s, stabilizing at around 4% for males and 2% for females. In the case of Entrepreneur, its levels are more constant over time, between 3% and 7%, and the gap is slightly greater after 2012 (probably as a result of the global financial crisis that started in the USA in 2008 with effects in European countries in the first years of the 2010s). In the case of Owner & Entrepreneur, the levels of this gap are the lowest, with a slightly positive trend. Interestingly, the gender gap of these three proxy variables remained constant throughout the years under study.

Figure 1
Gender Gaps by Variable Owner (2000–2019)



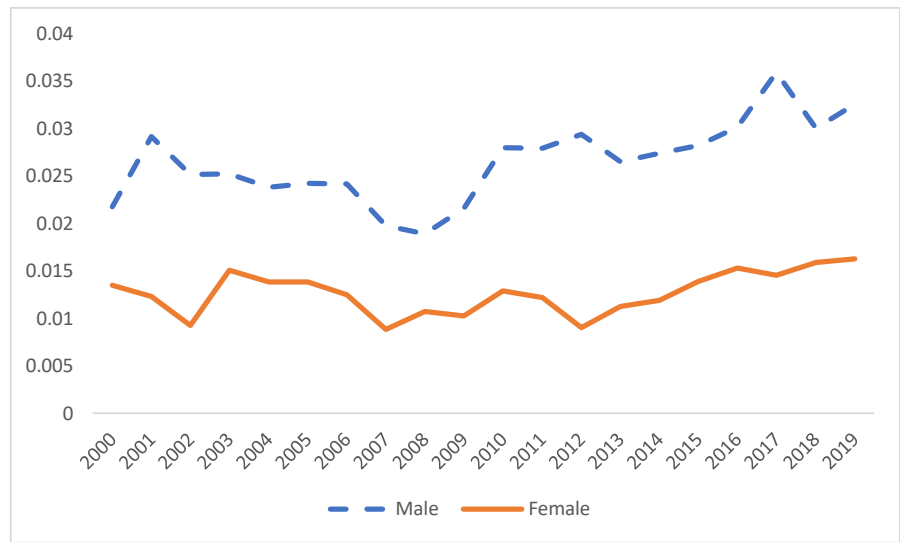
Note. Developed by the author based on The Russian Longitudinal Monitoring Survey—Higher School of Economics (n.d.).

Figure 2
Gender Gaps by Variable Entrepreneur (2000–2019)



Note. Developed by the author based on The Russian Longitudinal Monitoring Survey—Higher School of Economics (n.d.).

Figure 3
Gender Gaps by Variable Owner & Entrepreneur (2000–2019)



Note. Developed by the author based on The Russian Longitudinal Monitoring Survey—Higher School of Economics (n.d.).

Independent Variables

Following the literature (Cuberes et al., 2019; Tovar-García, 2022), the variables used to examine the association between gender and entrepreneurship are age, education, health status, marital status, number of children, trust, migration background, and ethnicity. Notably, the current research includes participation in physical exercise and religious events. Table 2 presents definitions of these variables and Table 3 shows descriptive statistics by gender. Baskakova and Soboleva (2017) noted that women show higher levels of education. Excluding Trust and Religious participation \times Non-religion, the *t*-tests indicate statistically different means at the 1% level in the rest of the independent variables.

Table 2
Independent Variables

Variable	Definition
Age	The age of respondents ranged from 18 to 60 years old. Age ² (squared) is also included to account for biological decline
Education	Ordinal variable. 1. 0–6 grades of comprehensive school (0.5% of respondents); 2. Unfinished secondary education [7–8 grades of school] (3.1%); 3. Unfinished secondary education [7–8 grades of school] plus something else (8.7%); 4. Secondary school with diploma (36.5%); 5. Vocational secondary education with diploma (26.5%), and 6. Higher education with diploma and more (24.8%)
Health	Ordinal variable. 1. Very bad (0.5%); 2. Bad (6.1%); 3. Average, not good, but not bad (52.3%); 4. Good (40%); 5. Very good (2.1%)

Table 2 Continued

Variable	Definition
Married	Dummy variable coded 1 if married, and 0 otherwise
Children	Number of children under the age of 18
Trust	Dummy variable coded 1 if “most people can be trusted”, and 0 otherwise
Migrant	Dummy variable coded 1 if “born in another place”, and 0 otherwise
Ethnicity	Dummy variable coded 1 if “Russian ethnicity”, and 0 otherwise
Big cities	Dummy variable coded 1 if “Moscow or Saint Petersburg”, and 0 otherwise
Physical exercise	Dummy variable coded 1 if “participate in physical exercise”, and 0 otherwise
Religious participation	Ordinal variable of visiting divine services, meetings or other religious events. 1. Never visit (24.9%); 2. Less often than once a year (16.6%); 3. Once a year (15.6%); 4. Several times a year (35.2%); 5. Once a month (3.8%); 6. Two or three times a month (2.4%), and 7. Once a week or more often (1.5%). Then, the variable is entered as an interaction term with the religious affiliation: Orthodox Christianity (81% of survey’s respondents), Islam (7%), and Non-religion (9.6%).

Note. Source: The Russian Longitudinal Monitoring Survey—Higher School of Economics (n.d.).

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics of the Predictors of Entrepreneurship by Gender

	Full sample					Male					Female				
	Obs.	M	SD	Min	Max	Obs.	M	SD	Min	Max	Obs.	M	SD	Min	Max
Age	197,699	38.23	12.05	18	60	89,286	37.67	11.86	18	60	108,413	38.69	12.18	18	60
Education	197,467	4.60	1.07	1	6	89,154	4.42	1.09	1	6	108,313	4.74	1.04	1	6
Health	196,659	3.36	0.65	1	5	88,767	3.44	0.66	1	5	107,892	3.30	0.64	1	5
Married	197,699	0.69	0.46	0	1	89,286	0.73	0.45	0	1	108,413	0.66	0.48	0	1
Children	123,668	0.85	0.89	0	9	51,144	0.92	0.90	0	9	72,524	0.80	0.88	0	9
Trust	99,025	0.15	0.36	0	1	44,713	0.15	0.36	0	1	54,312	0.15	0.36	0	1
Migrant	196,938	0.45	0.50	0	1	88,922	0.43	0.50	0	1	108,016	0.47	0.50	0	1
Ethnicity	195,427	0.86	0.35	0	1	88,063	0.85	0.36	0	1	107,364	0.87	0.34	0	1
Big cities	197,699	0.18	0.38	0	1	89,286	0.17	0.38	0	1	108,413	0.18	0.39	0	1
Religious participation × Non-religion	30,425	0.01	0.16	0	4	11,659	0.01	0.14	0	4	18,766	0.01	0.16	0	4
Religious participation × Islam	30,425	0.16	0.68	0	7	11,659	0.24	0.86	0	7	18,766	0.12	0.54	0	7
Religious participation × Orthodox Christianity	30,425	2.67	1.62	0	7	11,659	2.25	1.55	0	7	18,766	2.92	1.62	0	7
Physical exercise	185,793	0.25	0.43	0	1	83,848	0.27	0.44	0	1	101,945	0.24	0.42	0	1

Note. The *t*-tests indicate statistically different means at the 1% level in all variables, excluding Trust and Religious participation × Non-religion.

Method

The data set has several important characteristics. First, the dependent variables can be either binary or continuous. While continuous variables provide more information, binary variables offer different insights, which can be more useful for discriminant analysis and for discussing the likelihood of belonging to the entrepreneurial group. Additionally, both continuous and binary variables are valuable for robustness checks. Second, the data are longitudinal, and it is well-known that panel data are more informative. They exhibit greater variability, lower collinearity, more degrees of freedom, and increased efficiency. Moreover, panel data control for the impact of time-invariant determinants.

As stated before, various macro/environmental and micro/individual factors may influence gender gaps in entrepreneurship and the likelihood of becoming an entrepreneur. Many of these variables, such as family background, wealth, and culture, either remain stable over time or change slowly. For their part, political, legal, social, and macroeconomic conditions are largely similar for all respondents, allowing the model to control for their effects using year dummies (assuming these conditions are constant across individuals). However, it is well known that Moscow and Saint Petersburg exhibit different economic dynamics compared to the rest of the country; therefore, the regression models include a dummy variable for these cities.

Using Stata 17 software, logistic regressions are applied in the case of binary dependent variables. In the case of continuous dependent variables, random effects models are estimated (as recommended by the Hausman test), allowing the inclusion of time-invariant variables, such as migration status and ethnicity. It is important to recognize that these estimates do not indicate causal relationships. The regressors are widely used in the literature, but some of them may be endogenous. Therefore, this analysis is correlational, given the lack of instrumental variables or another method for better control of endogeneity concerns. However, the empirical strategy is useful to emphasize significant differences in the factors influencing the gender gap (with relevant policy implications).

Results

Table 4 presents the major results of the logistic regressions. The specifications follow the entrepreneur categorization mentioned above, and the same specification is estimated for each gender (regression results for the full sample are not reported in tables). It is important to note that the inclusion of variables related to participation in religious events decreases the sample size, as such data are only available for the years 2016–2019. For their part, the specifications that include participation in physical exercise cover the years 2011–2019, as the Trust variable included in the specification is only available for that period (regression results excluding Trust yield similar findings, not reported here).

The variables Trust, Migrant, Ethnicity, and Big Cities show only a few significant coefficients. Particularly, there is evidence suggesting that ethnically Russian males are less likely to become entrepreneurs, likely because labor regulations favor their

participation in the labor market, reducing the necessity for self-employment compared to other male citizens of different ethnic backgrounds.

By contrast, and as expected, age and health are significant predictors of becoming an entrepreneur (Lévesque & Minniti, 2006; Tovar-García, 2022; Xie, 2014). Moreover, these variables exhibit slightly larger coefficients and greater statistical significance across more specifications in the male sample compared to the female sample for age, and the reverse is true in the case of health.

Importantly, the coefficients for education are positive and statistically significant for males, indicating that higher education levels increase the likelihood of becoming an entrepreneur. For females, education is positive and statistically significant in only a few specifications. Moreover, for males, having children under the age of 18 and being married are insignificant predictors of entrepreneurial activity. In contrast, for females, only marriage positively predicts their likelihood of becoming entrepreneurs in a limited number of specifications.

Interestingly, religious participation, when interacting with Orthodox Christianity, and participation in physical exercise, show several positive and statistically significant coefficients in both male and female subsamples, thus serving as predictors of becoming an owner, entrepreneur, or both.

Table 4
Logit Regression Results: Male and Female Subsamples

	Owner		Entrepreneur				Owner & Entrepreneur					
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
Age	0.19	0.29*	0.40***	0.49***	0.11	0.37***	0.16***	0.36***	0.13	0.42**	0.52***	0.47***
Age ²	-0.002	-0.003	-0.004***	-0.01***	-0.001	-0.004***	-0.002***	-0.004***	-0.001	-0.004**	-0.01***	-0.01***
Education	0.22	0.58***	0.25***	0.60***	-0.01	0.48***	0.05	0.48***	-0.03	0.71***	0.28**	0.82***
Health	0.31	0.33	0.33**	0.29**	0.37**	0.32*	0.27***	0.18**	0.32	0.47**	0.44**	0.12
Married	0.68	0.25	0.55***	0.38	0.58**	0.59	-0.03	0.43	0.46	0.35	0.47	0.50
Children	0.19	0.10	0.18	0.08	0.05	-0.02	-0.04	0.10	0.17	0.08	0.20	0.17
Trust	0.53	-0.28	0.10	-0.22	-0.13	-0.51	-0.06	0.05	0.67	-0.64	-0.03	-0.26
Migrant	0.14	-0.10	-0.20	-0.09	0.26	0.16	0.05	-0.19	0.06	0.01	-0.21	-0.04
Ethnicity	0.16	-0.85*	-0.09	-0.60***	0.26	-0.93**	0.07	-0.69***	-0.20	-0.79	-0.34	-0.87***
Big cities	-0.50	-0.10	-0.58**	0.06	-0.37	-0.29	-0.22	0.25	-0.94	-0.33	-0.37	0.08
Religious participation × Non-religion	-1.67	-0.11			0.44	0.82			-1.95	0.26		
Religious participation × Islam	0.31	0.42**			0.25	0.17			0.28	0.29		

Table 4 Continued

	Owner		Entrepreneur				Owner & Entrepreneur					
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
Religious participation × Orthodox Christianity	0.21*	0.24***			0.06	0.28***			0.19	0.20**		
Physical exercise	0.57*	0.76***	0.32**	0.27*	0.49**	0.66***	0.20*	0.34***	0.64*	0.74***	0.23	0.22
Year dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	9877	5794	27608	20894	9823	5775	20774	20774	9823	5762	20774	20724
N × T	3906×4	2595×4	7577×9	6187×9	3894×4	2586×4	6176×9	6176×9	3894×4	2585×4	6176×9	6169×9

Note. Reporting logit coefficients (β) (odds ratio = exp(β)). F = Female; M = Male. *, **, and *** indicate statistical significance at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels, respectively.

Table 5 presents the main results of the random-effects models (fixed-effects regressions yield similar results, but these are not reported). Overall, the findings are consistent with those obtained from the logistic regressions.

Education does not appear to play a significant role in explaining female entrepreneurship. The regression results indicate that most coefficients are not statistically significant, with only a few exceptions observed in the female logistic regressions. However, the analysis provides stronger evidence supporting the relevance of marriage for entrepreneurship among women. Married women seem more likely to be opportunity-based entrepreneurs, as some regressions show statistically significant coefficients. These indicate that married women hire between 1% and 5% more employees compared to women of other civil status, as calculated using the formula $\{100 \times [\exp(0.01 \text{ or } 0.05) - 1]\}$. Meanwhile, having children under the age of 18 remains an insignificant predictor.

Importantly, the regression analysis identifies several positive and statistically significant coefficients for participation in Orthodox religious events and physical exercise, relevant to both men and women.

Table 5
Random Effects Regression Results: Male and Female Subsamples

	Owner		Entrepreneur				Owner & Entrepreneur					
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
Age	0.003	0.01	0.01***	0.03***	0.02**	0.03**	0.01***	0.03***	0.01	0.02**	0.01***	0.02***
Age ²	−0.00001	−0.0001	−0.0001*	−0.0003***	−0.0002**	−0.0003**	−0.0002***	−0.0003***	−0.0001	−0.0002*	−0.0001***	−0.0002***

Table 5 Continued

	Owner		Entrepreneur				Owner & Entrepreneur					
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
Education	0.01	0.03***	0.01	0.04***	−0.003	0.02	0.01	0.05***	−0.004	0.03***	0.005	0.03***
Health	0.01	0.03**	0.01*	0.03***	0.03***	0.02	0.02**	0.02*	0.005	0.03***	0.01**	0.01*
Married	0.02	0.004	0.03***	0.03	0.05**	0.07	0.003	0.04	0.01	0.02	0.01*	0.01
Children	0.003	0.01	0.003	0.001	−0.02*	−0.01	−0.01	0.01	0.003	0.01	0.001	0.01
Trust	0.01	0.003	0.01	0.003	−0.01	−0.04	−0.002	0.03*	0.02***	−0.02	−0.0003	0.01
Migrant	0.01	−0.01	−0.01	−0.01	0.03	0.04	0.01	0.005	0.01	0.01	0.001	−0.0001
Ethnicity	0.02	−0.03	0.003	−0.02	0.05	−0.15***	0.02	−0.05*	0.01	−0.03	0.004	−0.03
Big cities	−0.01	−0.01	−0.03**	0.01	−0.02	−0.04	0.002	0.03	−0.02	−0.02	−0.002	0.01
Religious participation × Non-religion	−0.02	−0.02			0.02	0.04			−0.01	−0.02		
Religious participation × Islam	0.004	0.04***			0.01	−0.001			0.002	0.01		
Religious participation × Orthodox Christianity	0.01***	0.01**			0.003	0.03***			0.004**	0.01*		
Physical exercise	0.0005	0.05***	0.01*	0.01	0.03**	0.09***	0.01	0.05***	−0.001	0.04***	0.01	0.01
Year dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
R squared	0.003	0.02	.01	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.003	0.02	0.002	0.02	0.002	0.02
Observations	7892	4139	21362	14093	7851	4127	21245	14028	7843	4120	21219	14000
N × T	3355×4	2042×4	6498×9	4934×9	3345×4	2036×4	6489×9	4926×9	3342×4	2033×4	6484×9	4919×9

Note. F = Female; M = Male. *, **, and *** indicate statistical significance at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels, respectively.

Discussion

The findings are highly interesting in the case of five variables: education, marriage, children, participation in religious events, and physical exercise.

Unlike in developed countries, particularly in Europe, where education is still a significant predictor of female entrepreneurship, and an important variable for reducing gender gaps (Gaweł & Krstić, 2021), education appears to be less relevant in Russia. The level of education weakly predicts female entrepreneurship, which could suggest a lack of alignment between these variables (Baskakova & Soboleva,

2017). Nevertheless, and contrary to typical recommendations in other countries (Gawel & Krstić, 2021), this finding suggests that policies aimed at increasing female education to close the gender gap may be irrelevant in the Russian context, where the educational gap already favors women. Therefore, future research focusing on the role of education is needed to gain a deeper understanding of this phenomenon.

Importantly, prior research has indicated that marriage and children can both positively and negatively impact women's entrepreneurship, depending on the context, particularly when comparing developed and developing countries, and less or more individualistic societies (Dutta, 2023; Li & Tong, 2023; Marshall & Flaig, 2014). Overall, it is often argued that entrepreneurship, particularly self-employment, provides women with more flexibility and a better balance between work and domestic life (Ajefu, 2019; Li & Tong, 2023; Marshall & Flaig, 2014). However, in the case of Russia, civil status and motherhood do not appear to be significant variables, likely because the culture and legislation support women's entry into the labor market, particularly when they have children (Bagirova & Blednova, 2022; Bodrova & Yudina, 2018; Teplova, 2007). For example, public kindergartens and schools, which offer services that align with parents' work schedules, allow both parents to participate in the labor market while caring for their children, in a context of low fertility rates (Bodrova & Yudina, 2018; Kolesnik et al., 2021). Therefore, flexibility in the workplace is provided by the state or a cultural position, and women do not necessarily require self-employment (entrepreneurship) to achieve work-life balance.

Furthermore, while marriage is not a significant predictor of female entrepreneurship, once a woman becomes an entrepreneur, there is some evidence suggesting that her motivations are not solely driven by a lack of job opportunities or unemployment, as seen in several developing countries (Panda, 2018). In contrast, in Russia, married women can act as job creators, functioning as opportunity-based entrepreneurs. However, the evidence is still limited, and further research is needed to better understand the role and significance of married female entrepreneurs.

The significance of religious participation in entrepreneurship has already been highlighted in Russia (Tovar-García, 2022). For males, involvement in Orthodox religious events (visiting divine services, meetings, or other religious events) appears to support entrepreneurial activities, and similar evidence is also found for females. Specifically, the social capital and networking opportunities that women gain through religious participation enable them to become opportunity-based entrepreneurs, which allows them to hire more employees compared to women who do not engage in these events. This finding is particularly noteworthy, as it contrasts with evidence from developing countries, where women are much less likely to engage in opportunity-based entrepreneurship (Oyono & Ondo, 2023).

Nevertheless, other patterns have been observed in other labor market outcomes in Russia. Unlike their male counterparts, female believers do not experience a wage penalty, though young female believers face a wage penalty of approximately 5% (Tovar-García, 2020). Therefore, further research is needed to gain a deeper understanding of the role religious participation plays in gender disparities.

Currently, no prior studies are known that discuss the relevance of physical exercise in explaining gender gaps in entrepreneurship. Nevertheless, the findings align with previous research highlighting the positive effects of participation in sports on the educational outcomes of women (Pfeifer & Cornelißen, 2010; Tovar-García, 2017, 2018). Moreover, these findings support arguments regarding the importance of sports and physical exercise in developing personality traits useful for entrepreneurship, such as a competitive mindset (Comeig et al., 2016; Comeig & Lurbe, 2018; Tovar-García, 2023) and aspects of the Big Five personality traits (Steca et al., 2018; Steinbrink et al., 2019; Tok, 2011).

As such, the current study underscores the significance of sports and physical exercise as predictors of female entrepreneurship. It also suggests that providing women with access to sports facilities may help reduce the gender gap. In addition to influencing personality traits, sports participation may offer social capital and networking opportunities that are advantageous for the development of female-owned businesses—an area that warrants further investigation. Consequently, the policy recommendation is to promote and facilitate women's participation in sports and physical exercise.

Other variables, such as trust and migration background, which were found to be irrelevant in this study, also warrant further exploration. Trust, commonly used as a proxy for social capital in many studies, has been shown to have both direct and indirect relevance for entrepreneurship (Baker et al., 2023; De Anda et al., 2023). Similarly, migration background is a known predictor of entrepreneurship in several developed countries, where self-employment is a typical career path for many migrants (Blackledge & Trehan, 2018; Brzozowski & Lasek, 2019). In the current study, trust is measured using a broad, general question, and migration includes internal migrants. These measurement issues are likely impacting the explanatory power of these variables, and thus the results should be interpreted with caution.

One advantage of the current research is the use of panel data; however, these data are self-reported. While the method is accurate for correlational analysis, it does not allow for claims of causality. This represents a key limitation of the research, and future studies should implement better controls to address potential endogeneity concerns.

Conclusion

The entrepreneurship gender gap in Russia is estimated to be approximately 2% from 2000 to 2019, a relatively low figure compared to many other developed countries (Cuberes et al., 2019). Notably, traditional explanatory variables of female entrepreneurship and the gender gap, such as education (Pereira & Manzo, 2024), marriage, and motherhood (Marshall & Flaig, 2014; Tundui & Tundui, 2021), are far less relevant in the Russian context.

As a result, traditional policy recommendations for addressing the gender gap in Russia may be unnecessary. Future research should instead focus on the effectiveness of past and current policies in Russia that support female education and the inclusion

of married women—both with and without children—in the labor market. The limited relevance of these variables is likely not only due to socio-cultural factors but also reflects outdated policies that continue to be influenced by Soviet-era traditions (Bagirova & Blednova, 2022; Bodrova & Yudina, 2018; Kolesnik et al., 2021; Teplova, 2007; Vakulenko et al., 2023). Additionally, future research should examine policy reports related to education, marriage, and children in Russia, as the limited relevance of these factors could offer valuable insights for developing new or alternative policy strategies aimed at fostering a more egalitarian labor market.

Moreover, the current research reveals that participation in religious events and physical exercise are significant predictors of female entrepreneurship, not only for self-employed women but also for opportunity-based entrepreneurs—those who create jobs. Therefore, the role of religion and sports in reducing gender gaps, not only in entrepreneurship but also in other areas, should be studied further in different national contexts.

References

- Abbasianchavari, A., & Block, J. (2022). Perceptual factors explaining the gender gap in entrepreneurial propensity: A replication and extension. *Journal of Business Venturing Insights*, 17, Article e00303. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbvi.2022.e00303>
- Ajefu, J. B. (2019). Does having children affect women's entrepreneurship decision? Evidence from Nigeria. *Review of Economics of the Household*, 17(3), 843–860. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11150-019-09453-2>
- Aliev, A. M. (2022). Analiticheskii obzor gosudarstvennoi programmy Rossiiskoi Federatsii "Razvitie fizicheskoi kul'tury i sporta" [Analytical review of the state program of the Russian Federation "Development of Physical Culture and Sports"]. *Economics and Management in Sports*, 2(3), 201–210. <https://doi.org/10.18334/sport.2.3.119711>
- Audretsch, D. B., Bönte, W., & Tamvada, J. P. (2007). *Religion and entrepreneurship* (Jena Economic Research Paper No. 2007–075). Friedrich Schiller University Jena, Max Planck Institute of Economics. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1025968>
- Bagirova, A., & Blednova, N. (2022). Parental leave as a potential demographic policy instrument in Russia: Mixed-methods research. *European Conference on Research Methodology for Business and Management Studies*, 21(1), 11–21. <https://doi.org/10.34190/ecrm.21.1.217>
- Baker, J. C., De Anda, F., & Tovar-García, E. D. (2023). The importance of trust for entrepreneurial internationalization: Evidence from Mexico. *Journal of Globalization, Competitiveness and Governability*, 17(3), 89–100. <https://doi.org/10.58416/GCG.2023.V17.N3.04>
- Baskakova, M., & Soboleva, I. (2017). Educational potential of Russian employers: The gender aspect. *Educational Studies Moscow*, 4, 83–103. <https://doi.org/10.17323/1814-9545-2017-4-83-103>

Blackledge, A., & Trehan, K. (2018). Language, superdiversity, and self-employment. In A. Creese & A. Blackledge (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of language and superdiversity* (pp. 299–311). Routledge.

Bodrova, E., & Yudina, E. (2018). Early childhood education in the Russian Federation. In J. L. Roopnarine, J. E. Johnson, S. F. Quinn, & M. M. Patte (Eds.), *Handbook of international perspectives on early childhood education* (pp. 59–69). Routledge.

Bönte, W., & Piegeler, M. (2013). Gender gap in latent and nascent entrepreneurship: Driven by competitiveness. *Small Business Economics*, 41(4), 961–987. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-012-9459-3>

Brzozowski, J., & Lasek, A. (2019). The impact of self-employment on the economic integration of immigrants: Evidence from Germany. *Journal of Entrepreneurship, Management and Innovation*, 15(2), 11–28. <https://doi.org/10.7341/20191521>

Comeig, I., Grau-Grau, A., Jaramillo-Gutiérrez, A., & Ramírez, F. (2016). Gender, self-confidence, sports, and preferences for competition. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(4), 1418–1422. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2015.10.118>

Comeig, I., & Lurbe, M. (2018). Gender behavioral issues and entrepreneurship. In A. Tur Porcar & D. Ribeiro Soriano (Eds.), *Inside the mind of the entrepreneur: Cognition, personality traits, intention, and gender behavior* (pp. 149–159). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-62455-6_11

Cuberes, D., Priyanka, S., & Teignier, M. (2019). The determinants of entrepreneurship gender gaps: A cross-country analysis. *Review of Development Economics*, 23(1), 72–101. <https://doi.org/10.1111/rode.12537>

Cuberes, D., & Teignier, M. (2016). Aggregate effects of gender gaps in the labor market: A quantitative estimate. *Journal of Human Capital*, 10(1), 1–32. <https://doi.org/10.1086/683847>

De Anda, F., Baker, J. C., & Tovar-García, E. D. (2023). Institutional trust and entrepreneurs' export behavior: An international analysis. *Tec Empresarial*, 17(3), 33–45. <https://doi.org/10.18845/te.v17i3.6848>

Deller, S. C., Conroy, T., & Markeson, B. (2018). Social capital, religion and small business activity. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 155, 365–381. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2018.09.006>

Dorjnyambuu, B. (2023). Entrepreneurial activity at the early stages in Central and Eastern European countries: Individual characteristics and the gender gap. *Regional Statistics*, 13(5), 797–823. <https://doi.org/10.15196/RS130502>

Dutta, N. (2023). Female entrepreneurship and marriage: Does individualism matter? *South Asian Journal of Macroeconomics and Public Finance*, 12(1), 7–28. <https://doi.org/10.1177/22779787211064505>

Gaweł, A., & Krstić, M. (2021). Gender gaps in entrepreneurship and education levels from the perspective of clusters of European countries. *Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship*, 26(4), Article 2150024. <https://doi.org/10.1142/S1084946721500242>

Guo, X., & Werner, J. M. (2016). Gender, family and business: An empirical study of incorporated self-employed individuals in the U.S. *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*, 8(4), 373–401. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJGE-12-2015-0046>

Guzman, J., & Kacperczyk, A. (2019). Gender gap in entrepreneurship. *Research Policy*, 48(7), 1666–1680. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.respol.2019.03.012>

Ilie, C., Monfort, A., Fornes, G., & Cardoza, G. (2021). Promoting female entrepreneurship: The impact of gender gap beliefs and perceptions. *SAGE Open*, 11(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440211018468>

Kaneva, M., Malyutina, S., Moiseenko, V., & Kudryavtsev, A. (2024). Seasonal differences in participation and time spent in physical activity in Russia: The Know Your Heart survey. *The International Journal of Health Planning and Management*, 39(5), 1530–1550. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hpm.3826>

Kolesnik, D. P., Pestova, A. A., & Donina, A. G. (2021). Chto (zhe) delat' s zaniatost'iu zhenshchin s det'mi v Rossii? Rol' doskol'nykh obrazovatel'nykh uchrezhdenii [What should we do about the employment of women with children in Russia? The role of preschool educational institutions]. *Voprosy Ekonomiki*, 12, 94–117. <https://doi.org/10.32609/0042-8736-2021-12-94-117>

Kozyreva, P., Kosolapov, M., & Popkin, B. M. (2016). Data resource profile: The Russia Longitudinal Monitoring Survey—Higher School of Economics (RLMS–HSE) Phase II: Monitoring the economic and health situation in Russia, 1994–2013. *International Journal of Epidemiology*, 45(2), 395–401. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ije/dyv357>

Kvanina, V. V., Gromova, E. A., & Spiridonova, A. V. (2020). Gosudarstvennaia podderzhka zhenskogo predprinimatel'stva [The governmental support for female entrepreneurship]. *Woman in Russian Society*, 4, 52–65. <https://doi.org/10.21064/WinRS.2020.4.5>

Lechner, M. (2009). Long-run labour market and health effects of individual sports activities. *Journal of Health Economics*, 28(4), 839–854. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhealeco.2009.05.003>

Lévesque, M., & Minniti, M. (2006). The effect of aging on entrepreneurial behavior. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 21(2), 177–194. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2005.04.003>

Lewis, V. A., MacGregor, C. A., & Putnam, R. D. (2013). Religion, networks, and neighborliness: The impact of religious social networks on civic engagement. *Social Science Research*, 42(2), 331–346. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2012.09.011>

Li, W., & Tong, D. (2023). The benefits of having an entrepreneur-mother: Influence of mother's entrepreneurial status on human capital formation among children. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 38(6), Article 106329. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2023.106329>

Marshall, M. I., & Flaig, A. (2014). Marriage, children, and self-employment earnings: An analysis of self-employed women in the US. *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*, 35(3), 313–322. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10834-013-9373-0>

Minniti, M., & Naudé, W. (2010). What do we know about the patterns and determinants of female entrepreneurship across countries? *European Journal of Development Research*, 22(3), 277–293. <https://doi.org/10.1057/ejdr.2010.17>

Mishkevich, M. A., & Shchebetenko, S. A. (2018). Polovye razlichii po chertam "Bol'shoi Piaterki": Vzgljad cherez prizmu ustanovok na cherty [Sex differences in the Big Five of personality: Looking through the attitudes toward traits]. *Psychology. Journal of the Higher School of Economics*, 15(3), 562–572. <https://doi.org/10.17323/1813-8918-2018-3-562-572>

Moore, I. C., Scully, J., & Theodorakopoulos, N. (2021). The gendered aspects of age capital for entering entrepreneurship. In M. Ince-Yenilmez & B. Darici (Eds.), *Engines of economic prosperity* (pp. 1–20). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-76088-5_1

Moustakas, L., & Reynard, S. (2023). Sport as a vehicle for entrepreneurship education: Approaches and future directions. In J. H. Block, J. Halberstadt, N. Högsdal, A. Kuckertz, & H. Neergaard (Eds.), *Progress in entrepreneurship education and training: New methods, tools, and lessons learned from practice* (pp. 289–301). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-28559-2_19

OECD. (2017). *Entrepreneurship at a glance 2017*. OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/entrepreneur_aag-2017-22-en

Oyono, J. C., & Ondo, H. A. (2023). National culture and gender gaps in entrepreneurial entry in developing countries. *Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship*, 28(2), Article 2350010. <https://doi.org/10.1142/S1084946723500103>

Panda, S. (2018). Constraints faced by women entrepreneurs in developing countries: Review and ranking. *Gender in Management*, 33(4), 315–331. <https://doi.org/10.1108/GM-01-2017-0003>

Pereira, E. T., & Manzo, M. (2024). The education impact on the innovativeness of female entrepreneurship: A systematic literature review. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Gender Research*, 7(1), 303–311. <https://doi.org/10.34190/icgr.7.1.2314>

Pervun, K., Libaers, D., & Sutton, N. (2024). From athletes to entrepreneurs: Participation in youth sports as a precursor to future business endeavors. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 62(1), 521–562. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00472778.2022.2073359>

Pfeifer, C., & Cornelißen, T. (2010). The impact of participation in sports on educational attainment—New evidence from Germany. *Economics of Education Review*, 29(1), 94–103. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2009.04.002>

Rahman, S. A., Alam, M. M. D., Khan, G. M., & Kennedy, R. E. (2023). Shaping bricolage behaviour: The role of personality traits among female entrepreneurs in an emerging economy. *International Journal of Emerging Markets*, 18(3), 525–546. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOEM-09-2020-1156>

Rietveld, C. A., & Patel, P. C. (2022). Gender inequality and the entrepreneurial gender gap: Evidence from 97 countries (2006–2017). *Journal of Evolutionary Economics*, 32(4), 1205–1229. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00191-022-00780-9>

Salis, G., & Flegl, M. (2021). Cross-cultural analysis of gender gap in entrepreneurship. *Changing Societies & Personalities*, 5(1), 83–102. <https://doi.org/10.15826/csp.2021.5.1.123>

Steca, P., Baretta, D., Greco, A., D'Addario, M., & Monzani, D. (2018). Associations between personality, sports participation and athletic success. A comparison of Big Five in sporting and non-sporting adults. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 121, 176–183. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2017.09.040>

Steinbrink, K. M., Berger, E. S. C., & Kuckertz, A. (2019). Top athletes' psychological characteristics and their potential for entrepreneurship. *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal*, 16(3), 859–878. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11365-019-00612-6>

Stepanova, E. A. (2018). Religious education in Russia : Between methodological neutrality and theological partiality. *Changing Societies & Personalities*, 2(3), 260–266. <https://doi.org/10.15826/csp.2018.2.3.042>

Tamzini, K., & Salem, A. B. (Eds.). (2020). *Understanding the relationship between religion and entrepreneurship*. IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-7998-1802-1>

Taufik, T., Prihartanti, N., & Hamid, H. S. A. (2019). Neuroticism, extraversion and conscientiousness as predictors of the hedonistic lifestyle. *North American Journal of Psychology*, 21(3), 645–660.

Teplova, T. (2007). Welfare state transformation, childcare, and women's work in Russia. *Social Politics*, 14(3), 284–322. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxm016>

Tereshina, D. (2023). Business as a gift: Family entrepreneurship and the ambiguities of sharing. In T. Koellner (Ed.), *Family firms and business families in cross-cultural perspective* (pp. 115–145). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-20525-5_5

The Russian Longitudinal Monitoring Survey—Higher School of Economics. (n.d.). HSE University. <https://www.hse.ru/en/rlms/>

Thébaud, S. (2010). Gender and entrepreneurship as a career choice: Do self-assessments of ability matter? *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 73(3), 288–304. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0190272510377882>

Thébaud, S. (2011). Social policies and entrepreneurship: Institutional foundations of gender gaps across 24 countries. *Academy of Management Proceedings*, 2011, 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.5465/ambpp.2011.65869493>

Thurik, A. R., Carree, M. A., van Stel, A., & Audretsch, D. B. (2008). Does self-employment reduce unemployment? *Journal of Business Venturing*, 23(6), 673–686. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2008.01.007>

Tok, S. (2011). The Big Five personality traits and risky sport participation. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 39(8), 1105–1112. <https://doi.org/10.2224/sbp.2011.39.8.1105>

Tovar-García, E. D. (2017). Association of practice of sports in and out-of-school with scholar performance—Evidence from Moscow and Saint Petersburg: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Physical Education*, 86(4), 270–278. <https://doi.org/10.37310/ref.v86i4.268>

Tovar-García, E. D. (2018). The association between sport activities and educational achievements: Evidence from Russian longitudinal data. *Educational Studies Moscow*, 2, 46–70. <https://doi.org/10.17323/1814-9545-2018-2-46-70>

Tovar-García, E. D. (2020). Religiosity and wage earnings in post-Soviet Russia. *Journal of Religion in Europe*, 13(1–2), 45–66. <https://doi.org/10.1163/18748929-13010002>

Tovar-García, E. D. (2021a). The associations of different types of sports and exercise with health status and diseases: Evidence from Russian longitudinal data. *Sport Sciences for Health*, 17(3), 687–697. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11332-021-00734-x>

Tovar-García, E. D. (2021b). Participation in sports, physical exercise, and wage income: Evidence from Russian longitudinal data. *German Journal of Exercise and Sport Research*, 51(3), 333–343. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12662-021-00727-5>

Tovar-García, E. D. (2022). Religiosity and entrepreneurship in post-Soviet Russia. *Journal for the Academic Study of Religion*, 35(3), 271–297. <https://doi.org/10.1558/jasr.22397>

Tovar-García, E. D. (2023, May 26–27). *The indirect effects of mass participation in sports on entrepreneurship: Evidence from Russian Longitudinal Data* [Paper presentation]. The 6th International Russian Longitudinal Monitoring Survey of HSE User Conference.

Tundui, H. P., & Tundui, C. S. (2021). Marriage and business performance: The case of women-owned micro and small businesses in Tanzania. *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies*, 13(5), 1287–1308. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEEE-06-2020-0202>

Vakulenko, E. S., Ivashina, N. V., & Svistuilnik, Y. O. (2023). Regional'nye programmy materinskogo kapitala: Vliianie na rozhdaemost' v Rossii [Regional maternity capital programmes: Impact on fertility in Russia]. *Economy of Regions*, 19(4), 1077–1092. <https://doi.org/10.17059/ekon.reg.2023-4-10>

Vianello, M., Schnabel, K., Sriram, N., & Nosek, B. (2013). Gender differences in implicit and explicit personality traits. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 55(8), 994–999. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2013.08.008>

Voronkova, A. I. (2019). Analiz putei rekrutirovaniia v zhenskuiu biznes-elitu [Recruitment pathways to female business elite]. *Monitoring of Public Opinion: Economic and Social Changes*, 3, 142–162. <https://doi.org/10.14515/monitoring.2019.3.09>

Xie, C. (2014). Why do some people choose to become entrepreneurs? An integrative approach. *Journal of Management Policy & Practice*, 15(1), 25–38.



ARTICLE

Cultural Dynamics in Social Commerce: An In-Depth Analysis of Consumer Behavior and Interaction Patterns

Fatemeh Nouri Dehnavi

Shanghai University, Shanghai, P.R. China

Negar Sioofy Khoojine

Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Türkiye

ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the cultural dynamics that shape consumer behavior in the context of social commerce in the Iranian capital of Tehran. Our sociological investigation examines the influence of norms, values, and cultural perceptions on social media interactions on platforms such as Instagram¹, Telegram, and internal networks like Soroush and Beel. Using factor analysis and multiple linear regression, we examine the relationships between ten key variables, revealing three main factors—the link of cultural perception, the set of transaction dynamics, and the quadruple of market values—that are primarily responsible for creating the complex interactions between culture and social business behaviors in this context. The findings suggest that cultural attitudes significantly influence consumers' perceptions of technology, trust in online platforms, and their purchase decisions. Furthermore, cultural values related to product quality, sustainability, and ethical consumption play an important role in shaping consumer expectations and business strategies. Drawing on Baudrillard's theory of consumption, this study shows that consumer behavior in social commerce goes beyond functional needs, such that purchase decisions are increasingly linked to identity formation

¹ Instagram™ is a trademark of Instagram Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries.
По решению Роскомнадзора, социальная сеть Instagram полностью заблокирована в России как экстремистская организация.

and social differentiation. We conclude with recommendations for adapting business strategies to align with cultural preferences, as well as suggestions for future research focused on technological developments and cross-cultural comparisons in social business.

KEYWORDS

social commerce, consumerism, social media, consumer behavior, Iranian consumer society, Cultural Perception Nexus, Transaction Dynamics Ensemble, Marketplace Values Quartet

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to Professor Wang Xiaoming, Shanghai University, for his invaluable guidance, insightful feedback, and continuous support throughout this research.

Introduction

Consumption is a vital process by which people acquire goods and services to satisfy their needs and wants (Griffiths, 2018), as well as a social concept. Together with individual preferences, patterns of consumption are influenced by social, cultural, and economic factors (Belolipetskaya et al., 2020). In recent times, consumption patterns have undergone significant changes as digital technologies continue to revolutionize people's online connections through which they purchase goods and services. As a result, e-commerce has become the primary method of conducting commercial transactions (T. Wu & Shao, 2022). This occurrence has become a major force behind the shift in consumption patterns.

Given that consumerism is an essential aspect of human life that shapes behavior and contributes to social identity, scholars have examined consumer behavior from sociological, economic, and cultural perspectives (Boström, 2020). Modern society heavily relies on consumption for survival, but it is also influenced by a plethora of elements, such as global advertising and media. The sociology of consumption continues to grow, expanding to include topics related to economic issues; consumer feelings, values, thoughts, behaviors, and identities; and social concepts (Shah & Asghar, 2023; Warde, 2015; Yin et al., 2021).

Effects of Technological Advances on the Online Market and Consumerism

Social commerce driven by technological advancements has drastically changed the way people buy and sell online, with social networking platforms playing a vital role in this transformation (Brahma & Dutta, 2020). Social commerce as a trend originating from these platforms has had a significant impact on people's lives by boosting interaction, improving access to goods and services, and introducing a greater variety of products at competitive prices. The upsurge of e-commerce has similarly

contributed to the growth in consumerism, brand reliance, and concerns surrounding luxury (Algharabat & Rana, 2021).

Online shopping dates back to the mid-1990s, propelled forward with the appearance of marketplaces like Amazon² and eBay³. Since then, social commerce has experienced exponential growth, offering producers, vendors, and consumers many rewards previously inaccessible through traditional e-commerce models. This has moved e-commerce beyond direct sales into social media-driven interactions and Web 2.0 technologies, revolutionizing commerce altogether.

Social Commerce was created by Yahoo⁴ in 2005 and denotes a collaborative online shopping toolkit (C. Wang & Zhang, 2012). Social commerce utilizes various social media and technologies, such as blockchain, to facilitate the exchange of goods and services between buyers and sellers (Mendoza-Tello et al., 2018; Shorman et al., 2019). The purpose is to shape consumption behavior by building cross-cultural interchange and consumer social identities through shared shopping experiences, which then influence future purchase choices (Busalim et al., 2024).

Social media platforms have become essential tools for the purchasing and selling processes of individuals and businesses alike. Businesses use these platforms to extend their customer reach and promote offerings, while consumers use them for inquiry before making well-informed purchase decisions (Lim & Rasul, 2022). This has significant societal implications as producers strive to offer diverse advertisements and exclusive marketing to achieve their objectives and interests, which encourages and persuades customers to purchase more. As a result, consumers are exposed to a wide variety of products and services, providing them with a broader range of consumption options. The sociological consequences of this transformation and the rapid spread of consumer culture are extensive and intricate (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

Social Commerce and Increased Consumption: From Targeted Advertising to Changing Consumer Behavior

According to neoliberal frameworks, consumption is essential to promoting economic growth and social progress (Ignjatović & Filipović, 2022). Nevertheless, while an increase in consumption levels can indicate economic developments and changes in a society, it can also cause the emergence of a complex social phenomenon of consumerism that raises concerns about irrational and unsustainable spending patterns (Panizzut et al., 2021). The explosion of online shopping platforms and e-commerce activities has fueled an increase in impulsive and irrational spending behaviors. In my opinion, the notion that consumption has overtaken production and identity as the main drivers shaping the order of contemporary society is compelling, especially given the influence of social commerce platforms. They have described consumption as a substitute for production, such that identity is a key factor in shaping the order of the late age, as evidenced by the emergence of social commerce and the

² <https://www.amazon.com>

³ <https://www.ebay.com>

⁴ <https://www.yahoo.com>

new ways it provides for businesses to reach potential customers through targeted advertising and appropriate recommendations.

Thanks to social media, today's consumers have unprecedented access to information about products and services, significantly influencing their purchasing patterns and decision-making processes. Social commerce offers faster, easier, and more accessible ways to acquire goods and services, thereby accelerating consumption rates (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Social commerce combines social media and e-commerce to both attract customers and promote sales and services while changing consumer consumption patterns. Cultural and societal forces have significantly altered customer interactions and relationships, leading to novel forms of consumption. Social commerce has made online shopping more engaging, convenient, and social by enabling consumers to communicate directly with sellers, share experiences with other consumers, offer recommendations, and obtain discounts on products advertised by merchants (Y. Wu et al., 2022), ultimately making consumer purchasing decisions more informed and at the same time prompting impulse buying behavior.

Research Questions

In recent years, social commerce has also influenced consumer behavior in urban areas like Tehran, where social media and online shopping intersect. As consumers increasingly use platforms such as Instagram⁵, Telegram⁶, and local networks like Soroush⁷ and Bale⁸, new patterns of interaction, trust, and decision-making emerge. Our first research question—How do the dynamics of social commerce influence consumer behavior in Tehran?—examines how social media affects traditional consumption and interaction.

The study also aims to identify key components of social commerce, focusing on the relationships between cultural perceptions, transaction dynamics, and market values, leading to the second question: How do we analyze the key components of social commerce and their interrelationships? This seeks to understand how these elements interact and impact consumer behavior.

Finally, we will investigate the role of culture in shaping consumer behavior within social commerce, with the third question: How does culture influence consumer behavior, and how can business strategies enhance interaction and satisfaction? This explores how cultural factors affect consumer behavior and identifies strategies for improving customer engagement in the social commerce landscape.

Briefly, here is an overview of the structure of this paper: in the introduction, we have raised research questions in the context of discussions on consumption and social commerce. In the literature review, we first review the key theories of social sciences related to consumption and previous studies on the topic. The methodology

⁵ Instagram™ is a trademark of Instagram Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. По решению Роскомнадзора, социальная сеть Instagram полностью заблокирована в России как экстремистская организация.

⁶ Telegram™ is a trademark of Telegram Group Inc., its operational center is based in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates.

⁷ <https://soroushplus.com>

⁸ <https://web.bale.ai>

section covers demographic information, questionnaire design, and analytical techniques. My analysis of the findings includes data descriptions, factor analysis results, and factor relationships. The discussion interprets the identified factors related to consumer behavior. Finally, my conclusion summarizes key findings, study limitations, and suggestions for future research.

Literature Review

Sociological Theories in the Field of Consumption

Sociological theorists have addressed the issue of consumption and consumer behavior. George Ritzer believes that there is no middle view of the topic of consumption, such that most theorists have either had negative opinions about this topic or they have examined the topic of consumption in a completely positive way (Ritzer & Smart, 2001).

Among early sociologists, Karl Marx's theory of capitalism value criticizes consumerism and consumption (Macat Team, 2017). Thorstein Veblen's ostentatious consumption theory deals with the motivations of consumer behavior and the cultural and social factors of the consumer (Veblen, 1899/1992). The book *The Production of Space* examined the subjects of consumerism and consumption behavior via the theory of "Space Production and Consumption" (Lefebvre, 1991). More recently, Marshall McLuhan has paid special attention to the influence of media on culture and social behavior in the theory "The medium is the message" (McLuhan, 2008). American sociologist George Ritzer, who became famous for presenting the McDonaldization theory, has shown the influence of fast-food culture on consumption patterns and social structure in this theory (Ritzer & Miles, 2019). Sociologists such as Susan Blumler or Juliet Schor are also considered pioneers in this field (Hamermesh, 1993; Neuman, 2010).

This article will primarily draw from the theories of Jean Baudrillard, whose early research focuses on the field of consumption (Baudrillard, 1998), with special attention to issues of consumer behavior, media, and culture. In particular, he theorized the concepts of symbolic consumption (Baudrillard, 1998, 2001), simulacra and simulation, and hyperreality (Baudrillard, 2008), which we will use to analyze interaction patterns in social business.

In his theory of symbolic consumption, Baudrillard states that the consumption of goods and services by people is not to satisfy their material needs; rather, it is a tool for the symbolic representation of identity, an expression of social status and cultural differences, as well as an expression of the values or beliefs of the consumer (Whalen, 1991). In this type of consumption, purchased goods act as signs or symbols through which people display their values, beliefs, and social affiliations to establish their social position through consumption. With the emergence of social media, more aspects of symbolic consumption have come to the fore. Social networking platforms like Instagram⁹ and TikTok¹⁰ represent virtual showcases for real people to present

⁹ Instagram™ is a trademark of Instagram Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. По решению Роскомнадзора, социальная сеть Instagram полностью заблокирована в России как экстремистская организация.

¹⁰ TikTok is a trademark of ByteDance, registered in China and other countries. TikTok has suspended all new posting and live-streaming for users in the Russian Federation.

their ideal virtual version of themselves with their assets, knowledge, experiences, and overall lifestyle (Ham et al., 2024). In the field of social commerce, especially in Tehran, consumers are not exempt from this rule, and they are also trying to find a way to express themselves by choosing or interacting with special products and special brands, going to luxury places, and making aimless and unnecessary purchases to express their social and economic position—ultimately, their fictional and symbolic identities (Horng & Wu, 2020).

Another key concept from Baudrillard's work is simulacra and simulation. In this theory, he analyzes how virtual space in modern media and technology has changed our perceptions of reality, or "real life," replacing the world with virtual life. That is, in postmodern societies, signs and symbols have been separated from their real source, and simulated signs and symbols have replaced authentic realities (Essien, 2024). Baudrillard asserts that in this simulated space, values, symbols, experiences, and, in general, the identities of consumers are not based on physical realities; rather, they are based on images and virtual representations—what he calls hyperreality.

In the digital age and with the emergence of social commerce, it is increasingly likely that people's consumption is based on simulacra and simulation, as processes, goods, and services are represented in a symbolic and visual way that does not correspond to their real life. The emergence of colorful famous brands, the presentation of attractive and stylish images of products, the use of Photoshop¹¹ and manipulated images, constant advertising in social networks, celebrities featuring in advertisements, the introduction of goods and services, providing positive feedback of the product, and so on. This obscures the quality and even the appearance of goods or services, putting consumers in a simulated environment; therefore, people's shopping experiences and social interactions are not based on their real needs but rather based on symbolic representations (Lavoye et al., 2023).

If this process is examined more carefully, we notice that these simulations in social business have not only influenced the way consumers choose and consume but also shaped their behaviors, feedback, and expectations about future purchases and spending. Hence, examining the facts and simulating and finding things that are out of the realm of reality and joined to meta-reality can effectively help in the analysis of consumer behavior and the analysis of interaction patterns in social business, and it enables researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics of social business and its cultural and social impacts.

Existing Research on Cultural Dynamics in Social Commerce

To understand the cultural dynamics in social commerce, this section examines existing studies on how cultural interaction impacts consumer behavior and marketing strategies in online environments. In particular, we aim to gain a deeper understanding of how digital cultures are formed and evolve, how these cultures influence purchasing decisions, and the challenges associated with managing culture within the social commerce space.

¹¹ Photoshop™ is a trademark of Adobe Systems Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. <https://www.adobe.com/products/photoshop.html>

Zhang et al.'s research explores the influence of mood and social presence on consumer purchase behavior in consumer-to-consumer (C2C) e-commerce, with a study involving 200 participants in China. The study found that mood plays a significant role in consumer purchase behavior, impacting perceived benefit and purchase intention (Zhang et al., 2012). Similarly, Chen et al. studied how integrating social media plugins into e-commerce websites affected online consumer behavior; their research showed a positive impact on consumer purchase intention (Chen et al., 2013).

Jain (2014) investigates the impact of social commerce on consumer behavior, specifically focusing on Facebook¹² commerce (F-commerce). This research highlights the combined impact of two significant digital trends: e-commerce and social media (Jain, 2014). Kim et al. (2014) discuss the need for companies to address service failure cases in social commerce that cause expansive consumer damage. Their survey of 300 active social commerce users who have experienced at least one service failure showed that consumers blame failed incidents on social commerce companies and merchants (Kim et al., 2014). Hajli (2013) examines the "emergent imperative" of social commerce, which enables consumers to generate active web content and engage commercially with providers through social networking systems. Their study focuses on adoption behavior through the technology acceptance model, social commerce constructs, and trust (Hajli, 2013).

Utilizing social influence theory, which posits that peers can change a consumer's behavior along two dimensions, informational and normative, Hu et al. (2019) investigate one consumer behavior that could generate considerable economic value: impulsive purchase behavior. Huang & Huo (2021) analyze the behavior interaction and strategy selection mechanism between a merchant's choice of opinion leader, product recommendation, and consumer's purchase decision via evolutionary game theory. Similarly, Wang unravels the role of digital influencers in consumer engagement and purchase behavior in online social commerce communities, finding that several forms of social power from digital influencers could influence consumer's purchase expenditure in the social commerce community (P. Wang & Huang, 2023). Singh et al. (2023) highlight the need for research on the relationship between consumer value, risk, and trust in the context of social cross-platform perceptions in the context of India. This research focuses on the rise of social cross-platform buying behavior in India and examines the influence of perceived risk, perceived value, trust, and marked negative reporting on consumer behavior (Singh et al., 2023).

Numerous studies have contributed to the understanding of diverse facets of consumer behavior in social commerce (Algharabat & Rana, 2021; Busalim et al., 2024; Xiang et al., 2022). A discernible void still exists in the literature on the cultural dimensions of consumer behavior. Prior investigations have explored themes such as social presence, service failure, technology acceptance, and the impact of digital influencers across various contexts. However, these studies have not extensively

¹² Facebook™ is a trademark of Facebook Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. По решению Роскомнадзора, социальная сеть Facebook в России признана экстремистской организацией и заблокирована

delved into the intricate ways in which cultural norms and values may exert influence on these behaviors. Munther M. Habib analyzes Jean Baudrillard's theories on culture and consumerism from a postmodern viewpoint, with particular emphasis on the significance of *Simulacra and Simulation*; he concludes that the postmodern society has addressed and deconstructed various aspects of human life in a significant manner (Habib, 2018)

Despite the contributions of existing research to understanding various aspects of consumer behavior in social commerce—including the impact of mood, social plugins, service failures, and the role of digital influencers—a significant gap remains regarding the cultural dimensions of these behaviors. Current studies have not adequately addressed how cultural norms and values influence consumer interactions and decision-making processes within the social commerce domain. Therefore, this research aims to bridge this gap by examining the cultural impacts on consumer behavior and integrating theoretical frameworks to provide a more comprehensive analysis of cultural influences in the context of globalized social commerce.

Study Objectives

Despite the popularity of social commerce among social media users, further research is needed to explore its sociological relationship with consumption. This paper contributes to the literature by focusing on the cultural aspects of social commerce and their impacts on consumer behavior in Tehran. Specifically, we examine how the blend of digital commerce and social interaction influences Iranian purchasing decisions, contributing to broader discussions on social commerce in various cultures. Utilizing a survey-based method, the study gathers empirical data to reveal preferences, behaviors, and cultural factors that shape consumer dynamics.

Additionally, the research identifies key components of social commerce—such as cultural perceptions, transaction dynamics, and market values—and highlights culture's role in shaping consumer behavior and business strategies. The findings reveal how cultural values affect customer service, product discovery, and ethical consumption, informing businesses on improving engagement and satisfaction. The paper's objectives are as follows:

1. Examine the dynamics of social commerce and its impact on consumer behavior in Tehran.
2. Identify and analyze key components of social commerce, such as customer service systems and purchasing trends.
3. Explore the influence of culture on consumer behavior and its implications for business strategies.

Methodology

Participant Selection and Demographics

The research methodology investigates the intersection of consumption and social commerce from a sociological viewpoint, with particular attention paid to how social commerce influences cultural consumer behavior patterns. We selected a survey-based approach for this project, which randomly sampled 400 men and women from

the Iranian capital of Tehran; their demographic composition included individuals of diverse ages, genders, geographical locations, cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds, and social statuses.

Survey and Data Collection Tool

Data was gathered via an online survey conducted from June 1, 2023, to July 30, 2023. We posted the survey to various social media platforms such as Instagram¹³, Telegram, Soroush, Eitaa¹⁴, and Bale. The survey questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions intended to examine how social media networks and commerce affect sociocultural implications. A stratified sampling strategy was utilized based on age, gender, education level, income levels, and residential location of participants. Individuals were randomly chosen from both urban and suburban regions in Tehran, thus encompassing a comprehensive array of relevant experiences and opinions pertinent to the study's objectives. The acquired data was electronically entered into a tailored Persian-language survey platform and subsequently analyzed using IBM-SPSS 27 statistical software. Descriptive statistics were used to establish a baseline by extracting information on respondents' age, income, education level, and gender.

Questionnaire Design

This study delves into the intricate influence of cultural aspects on human behavior, particularly within the realm of prominent social media platforms, with a specific focus on social commerce. Ten carefully selected variables serve as the foundation of this study, each of which we thoroughly examine through a series of tailored questions. Below we provide a comprehensive understanding of each variable:

1. Perception of Social Media Commerce (PSMC).

Cultural attitudes towards technology, trust in online platforms, and the perception of social interactions can shape how individuals view social media commerce. For example, some cultures place a greater emphasis on face-to-face transactions, while others may embrace the convenience of online platforms.

2. Customer Service and Payment Systems (CSPS).

Cultural preferences for communication styles and payment methods can influence customer service expectations—such as a preference for formal communication, and specific payment systems may be more widely accepted or trusted.

3. Product Discovery and Social Sharing (PDSS).

Cultural values, such as collectivism or individualism, can impact the tendency to share product discoveries. In some cultures, individuals might be more inclined to share products that align with communal values or personal preferences.

4. Consumer Seller Interaction (CSI).

Cultural norms regarding politeness, negotiation, and expectations in buyer-seller relationships can influence interactions on social media. In high-context

¹³ Instagram™ is a trademark of Instagram Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. По решению Роскомнадзора, социальная сеть Instagram полностью заблокирована в России как экстремистская организация.

¹⁴ <https://web.eitaa.com>

cultures, where communication is more implicit, interactions might be nuanced compared to low-context cultures.

5. *Influence of Social Proof and Advertising (ISPA).*

Cultural aesthetics, values, and collective decision-making can affect how social proof and advertising resonate. Certain symbols or appeals may be more effective in specific cultures, and the importance of social validation can vary.

6. *Product Quality and Satisfaction (PQS).*

Cultural expectations regarding quality, durability, and aesthetics can impact satisfaction levels. For instance, cultures that strongly emphasize craftsmanship may prioritize product quality differently than those that prioritize functionality.

7. *Impulse Purchases and Spending Habits (IPSH).*

Cultural attitudes towards consumption, savings, and impulsivity can shape spending habits. In some cultures, there may be a tendency to make more impulsive purchases, while others may emphasize thoughtful consideration before buying.

8. *Price Comparison (PC).*

Cultural attitudes towards haggling, bargaining, and perceptions of value can affect the importance of price comparison, such that some consumers may actively seek the best deal and others may prioritize other factors besides price.

9. *Online Shopping Behavior (OSB).*

Cultural factors such as trust in e-commerce, risk aversion, and the desire for personalized experiences can influence online shopping behavior. Cultural collectivism may also influence group purchasing decisions.

10. *Sustainability and Ethical Consumption (SEC).*

Cultural values related to environmental consciousness, social responsibility, and ethical considerations can shape attitudes towards sustainable and ethically produced products. Some cultures may place a higher importance on these factors in their purchasing decisions.

The summary of variables in this study and the key cultural factors influencing them is presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Summary of Variables and the Key Cultural Factors Influencing Them

Variable	Abbreviation	Cultural Factors Influencing
Perception of Social Media Commerce	PSMC	Cultural attitudes towards technology Trust in online platforms Perception of social interactions
Customer Service and Payment Systems	CSPS	Cultural preferences for communication styles Influence of payment methods on expectations
Product Discovery and Social Sharing	PDSS	Cultural values (collectivism/individualism) Impact on tendencies to share product discoveries
Consumer-Seller Interaction	CSI	Cultural norms regarding politeness, negotiation, and buyer-seller relationship expectations

Table 1 Continued

Variable	Abbreviation	Cultural Factors Influencing
Influence of Social Proof and Advertising	ISPA	Cultural aesthetics and values Collective decision-making influencing resonance
Product Quality and Satisfaction	PQS	Cultural expectations on quality, durability, and aesthetics
Impulse Purchases and Spending Habits	IPSH	Cultural attitudes towards consumption, savings, and impulsivity
Price Comparison	PC	Cultural attitudes towards haggling, bargaining, and perceptions of value
Online Shopping Behavior	OSB	Cultural factors like trust in e-commerce, risk aversion, and desire for personalized experiences
Sustainability and Ethical Consumption	SEC	Cultural values related to environmental consciousness and social responsibility

We designed a set of four tailored questions to comprehensively assess the impact of each variable. We have supplemented some questions with examples to facilitate a deeper understanding of the nuanced relationship between cultural aspects and the variables under consideration.

The formulation of the questionnaire adhered rigorously to academic standards, emphasizing clarity, neutrality, and impartial inquiry. To enhance its efficacy, we conducted a meticulous small-scale pilot test before broader administration. Through this preliminary evaluation, we aimed to refine the questionnaire's clarity, ensuring respondents' ease of comprehension and response to each item. The final questionnaire, as informed by the insights gleaned from the pilot test, is documented in Table 1 (Appendix). This instrument proves indispensable in capturing valuable insights into the intricate interplay between cultural aspects and the ten selected variables within the domain of social commerce on prominent social media platforms.

Analytical Techniques: Exploratory Factor Analysis and Multiple Linear Regression

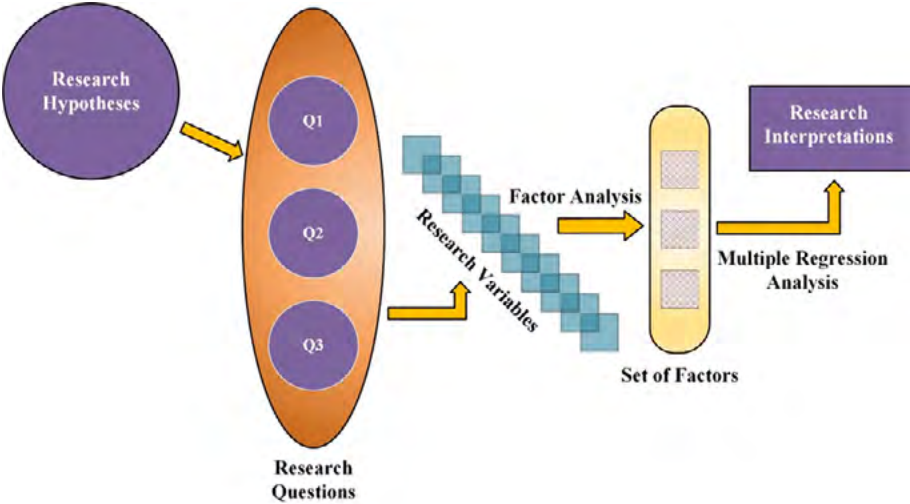
We will use factor analysis to explore the relationships among the 10 identified variables. This statistical technique reveals underlying dimensions that explain variables. correlations (Schuster & Yuan, 2005). Initially, we conducted an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to determine the number of dimensions in our dataset, with loadings indicating the strength of relationships between factors and observed variables (Backhaus et al., 2023).

After identifying these dimensions, we use their scores in multiple linear regression to predict continuous outcomes. The regression coefficients reflect how changes in each factor affect the dependent variable (Nimon & Oswald, 2013).

For categorical predictors, we compare the mean of the reference category with others.

It is important to note that multiple linear regression requires certain conditions, such as independence of errors, linearity, absence of multicollinearity, and minimal influential outliers. By combining factor analysis with regression, we aim to uncover hidden relationships among variables, providing a comprehensive understanding of how they interact in our study (Ranganathan et al., 2017). This systematic approach is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Methodological Design



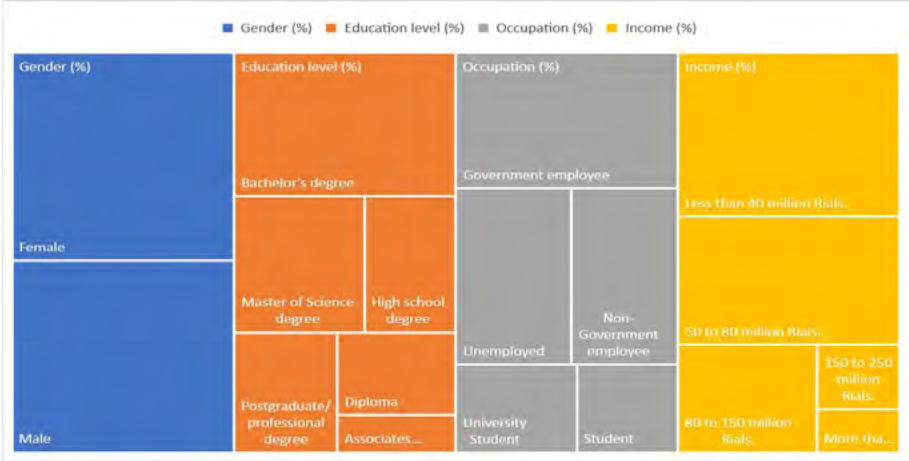
Notes. The flowchart of the systematic process utilized for designing and implementing the research methodology. Source: developed by the authors.

Analysis of the Findings

Data Description

This study involved a sample of 400 participants, of whom 52% were women, with an average age of 34.5 years ($SD = 16.2$). Table 2 details the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. In terms of education, 36% hold a bachelor's degree, 20% a master's degree, and 14% are high school graduates. Regarding occupation, 34% are government employees, 23% are housewives, 21% are non-government workers, 12% are university students, and 23% are unemployed. Income distribution shows that 41% earn less than 40 million Rials, 32% between 50 and 80 million, 18% between 80 and 150 million, 6% between 150 and 250 million, and four earn over 250 million Rials. Figure 2 illustrates the even spread of these demographic aspects, indicating no significant discrepancies and thus enhancing the study's methodological rigor.

Figure 2
Demographic Parameters



Notes. Tree map plot illustrating the demographic parameters of the collected data. Source: developed by the authors.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics for Gender, Education Level, Occupation, and Income Within the Sampling Society

Characteristics		
	Mean Age (SD)	34.5 (16.2)
Gender (%)	Female	52
	Male	48
Education Level (%)	High school degree	14
	Diploma	11
	Associates degree	5
	Bachelor's degree	36
	Master's degree	20
	Postgraduate/professional degree	14
Occupation (%)	Government employee	34
	Student	10
	University Student	12
	Unemployed	23
	Non-Government employee	21
Income (%)	Less than 40 million Rials.	41
	50 to 80 million Rials.	32
	80 to 150 million Rials.	17
	150 to 250 million Rials.	6
	More than 250 million Rials.	4

Data analysis revealed varied social media usage for social commerce among respondents, with Instagram leading at 40.5% for purchase transactions. Other platforms included Telegram (22.4%), WhatsApp¹⁵ (19.5%), and Iranian platforms like Soroush, Rubika¹⁶, and Bale (11%).

In terms of shopping preferences, clothing and footwear represented the top categories, making up 40.5% of transactions. Other significant categories included home appliances and furniture (13.1%), cosmetics and personal care (10.7%), and electronics (9.4%). These insights highlight the evolving behavior of Iranian consumers and the impact of social media on traditional business practices. Detailed results on preferred platforms and sought-after items are shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Popular Social Media Platforms for Social Commerce and the Most Popular Items Available for Purchase

Platforms and items		Percentage
Social Media Platforms	Instagram	40.5
	WhatsApp	19.5
	Telegram	22.4
	Soroush	1.9
	Bale	4.2
	Rubika	4.9
	Others	6.6
Shopping Items	Clothes, bags, and shoes	34.6
	Electronic appliances	9.4
	Educational supplies	10.7
	Home appliances	13.1
	Foodstuffs	9.7
	Home decoration	8
	Cosmetic	14.1
	Others	0.6

Factor Analysis Results

To explore the interplay between cultural aspects and social commerce on major social media platforms, we conducted a factor analysis of 10 selected variables. We report results from two key statistical tests: the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity. A KMO value of 0.75 indicates satisfactory sampling adequacy for factor analysis, while Bartlett’s Test ($\chi^2 = 240.23$, $df = 36$, $p < .001$) confirms the factorability of the correlation matrix, suggesting the variables are suitable for analysis.

Communalities reflect how much each variable contributes to the extracted factors, ranging from 0.62 to 0.85 in our study. This range indicates the factors explain

¹⁵ WhatsApp is a trademark of WhatsApp Inc., registered in the US and other countries.

¹⁶ <https://rubika.ir>

62% to 85% of the variance between variables, highlighting a significant shared variance. This reliability reinforces the effectiveness of our factor analysis in capturing the complex relationships among the cultural dimensions influencing social commerce on these platforms. A summary of the communalities is provided in Table 4.

Table 4
The Communalities Summary of Variables

No	Variable	Communalities
1	PSMC	0.78
2	CSPS	0.80
3	PDSS	0.75
4	CSI	0.62
5	ISPA	0.65
6	PQS	0.70
7	IPSH	0.85
8	PC	0.82
9	OSB	0.78
10	SEC	0.80

The variability in the dataset attributed to each principal component is defined by initial eigenvalues and their percentage of explained variance. As shown in Table 5, cumulative percentages reflect components' overall explanatory power, revealing that components 1, 2, and 3 account for 63.6% of the variance. This suggests potential redundancy in later components. Eigenvalues indicate each component's contribution to variance, with higher values showing greater explanatory power. As shown in Table 6, Components 1 (3.52), 2 (2.56), and 3 (1.98) are significant contributors, as values above one signify substantial impact on capturing dataset variance.

Table 5
Initial Eigenvalues Showcasing the Contribution and Cumulative Impact of Each Component in the Data Variability.

Component	Initial Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Cumulative %
Component 1	3.52	27.8	27.8
Component 2	2.56	20.2	48.5
Component 3	1.98	15.6	63.6
Component 4	1.20	9.5	73.1
Component 5	0.85	6.7	79.8
Component 6	0.72	5.7	85.5
Component 7	0.60	4.7	90.2

Table 5 Continued

Component	Initial Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Cumulative %
Component 8	0.50	3.9	94.1
Component 9	0.40	3.1	97.2
Component 10	0.30	2.3	100

Table 6
Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings for Principal Components Analysis

Component	Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings	% Of Variance	Cumulative %
Component 1	3.20	26.8	26.8
Component 2	2.45	20.5	47.3
Component 3	1.90	15.9	63.2
Component 4	1.15	9.6	72.8
Component 5	0.82	6.8	79.6
Component 6	0.70	5.8	85.4
Component 7	0.58	4.8	90.2
Component 8	0.48	4.0	94.2
Component 9	0.38	3.1	97.3
Component 10	0.28	2.3	100

The goodness-of-fit indices indicate a satisfactory fit of the model to the data: $\chi^2(24) = 112.45$, $p < .001$; Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = 0.92; Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = 0.08. The summary is shown in Table 7.

Table 7
Summary of Goodness-of-Fit for the Purposed Factor Analysis Model

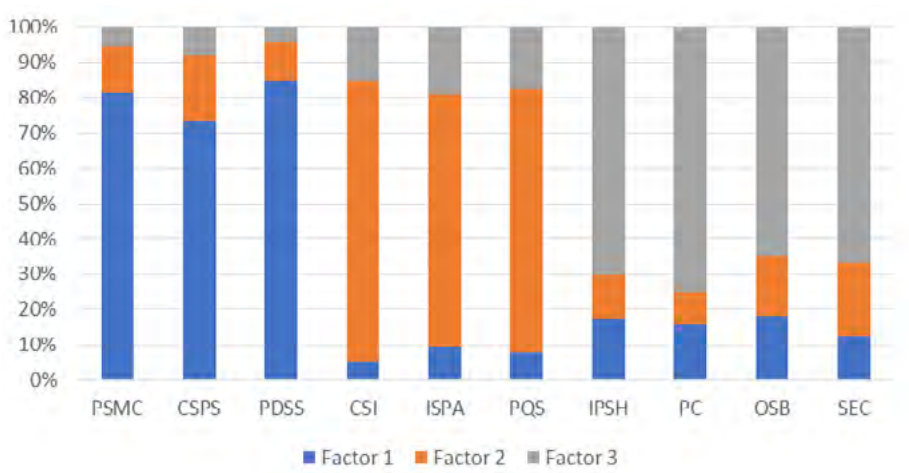
Statistic	Value
Chi-Square	112.45
Degrees of Freedom	24
p -value	< .001
CFI	0.92
RMSE	0.08

As shown in Table 8, the pattern matrix displays factor loadings for each variable on the three extracted factors. Notable loadings include PSMC, CSPS, and PDSS on Factor 1; CSI, ISPA, and PQS on Factor 2; and IPSH, PC, OSB, and SEC on Factor 3. The stacked percent bar chart of the pattern matrix is shown in Figure 3.

Table 8
The Pattern Matrix of Factor Loadings for Each Variable.

Variable	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
PSMC	0.75	0.12	0.05
CSPS	0.72	0.18	0.08
PDSS	0.78	0.10	0.04
CSI	0.05	0.80	0.15
ISPA	0.10	0.75	0.20
PQS	0.08	0.78	0.18
IPSH	0.20	0.15	0.82
PC	0.18	0.10	0.85
OSB	0.22	0.20	0.78
SEC	0.15	0.25	0.80

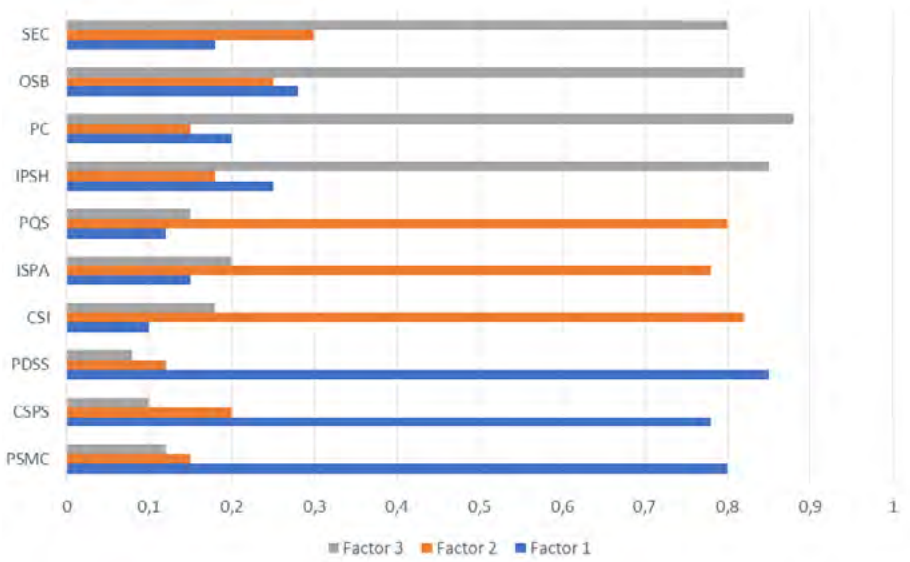
Figure 3
Stacked Percent Bar Chart of the Pattern Matrix for 10 Selected Variables



Note. Source: Developed by the authors.

The structure matrix is given in Table 9. This allowed for a clearer interpretation of the relationships between variables and underlying factors. Figure 4 shows the stacked bar chart of the structure matrix.

Figure 4
The Stacked Bar Chart of the Structure Matrix



Note. Source: Developed by the authors.

Table 9
The Structure Matrix Displaying the Correlations Between Variables and Factors

Variable	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
PSMC	0.80	0.15	0.12
CSPS	0.78	0.20	0.10
PDSS	0.85	0.12	0.08
CSI	0.10	0.82	0.18
ISPA	0.15	0.78	0.20
PQS	0.12	0.80	0.15
IPSH	0.25	0.18	0.85
PC	0.20	0.15	0.88
OSB	0.28	0.25	0.82
SEC	0.18	0.30	0.80

Inter-Factor Relationships

Our factor analysis aimed to clarify and conduct a multiple regression analysis to assess the influence of two specific variables under Factor 1. We explain the rationale behind this analytical approach in the subsequent section.

Our linear regression analysis identified significant coefficient estimates for Factor 1. The intercept was 0.4125 ($p < .001$), representing the expected value of

Factor 1 when Factors 2 and 3 are zero. Factor 2 showed a strong positive relationship ($\beta = 0.7028, p < .001$), indicating a 0.7028 increase in Factor 1 for each unit change in Factor 2, with Factor 3 holding constant. Similarly, Factor 3 had a positive effect ($\beta = 0.4883, p < .001$), corresponding to a 0.4883 increase in Factor 1 with Factor 2 holding constant. The model explained 77.5% of the variance in Factor 1 ($R^2 = 0.775$) and was highly significant ($F = 156.4, p < .001$). Residuals showed normality (Omnibus = 3.210, $p = .201$) and no autocorrelation (Durbin–Watson = 1.892). Model fit was confirmed by low AIC (474.4) and BIC (486.9) values. Full regression results are shown in Table 10.

Table 10
OLS Regression Results for Effect of Factors 2 and 3 on Factor 1

OLS Regression Results						
Dep. Variable		Factor 1		<i>R</i> -squared		0.775
Model		OLS		Adj. <i>R</i> -squared		0.770
Method		Least Squares		<i>F</i> -statistic		156.4
Prob (F-statistic)				4.11e-57		
Log-Likelihood				−234.21		
No. Observations		400		AIC		474.4
Df Residuals		397		BIC		486.9
Df Model		2				
Covariance Type		robust				
	coef	std err	<i>t</i>	P> <i>t</i>	[0.025	0.975]
const	0.4125	0.092	4.501	0.000	0.232	0.593
Factor 2	0.7028	0.045	15.472	0.000	0.614	0.791
Factor 3	0.4883	0.062	7.911	0.000	0.367	0.609
Omnibus		3.210		Durbin–Watson		1.892
Prob (Omnibus)		0.201		Jarque–Bera (JB)		2.979
Skew		−0.253		Prob (JB)		0.226
Kurtosis		3.229		Cond. No.		5.53

Note. OLS regression results for analyzing the effect of Factor 2 and 3 on Factor 1.

Discussion

Our factor analysis of the influence of social commerce on consumer behavior revealed key relationships among 10 variables, grouped into three categories based on shared patterns and cultural implications. Factor 1, the “Cultural Perception Nexus,” includes the variables perception of social media commerce, consumer-seller interaction, and influence of social proof and advertising. Factor 2, the “Transaction Dynamics Ensemble,” covers customer service and payment systems, impulse purchases and spending habits, and online shopping behavior. Factor 3, the “Marketplace Values Quartet,” includes Product Discovery and Social Sharing, Product Quality

and Satisfaction, Price Comparison, and Sustainability and Ethical Consumption. This categorization clarifies the cultural dimensions shaping the behaviors under examination.

Factor 1: Cultural Perception Nexus

The findings of Factor 1, the “Cultural Perception Nexus,” reveal the strong influence of cultural aspects on consumer behavior in the context of social commerce. Culture significantly shapes how individuals perceive social media commerce, and attitudes toward technology and trust in online platforms vary significantly across cultures. For instance, cultures valuing face-to-face transactions may require businesses to emphasize trust-building measures (e.g., customer reviews) to mitigate concerns about online shopping (Nilsson & Mattes, 2015; Robert et al., 2009). In individualistic cultures, businesses might focus on personal experiences, while collectivist cultures may benefit from fostering a sense of community and user interaction.

Cultural norms also impact consumer–seller interactions. In high-context cultures, communication tends to be more implicit, such that interactions are more nuanced compared to low-context cultures that favor directness. In order to improve consumer satisfaction and trust, businesses should adjust their communication strategies to align with these cultural communication styles.

Additionally, cultural attitudes toward social proof and advertising play a key role in social commerce. Cultural responses to symbols and social validation vary (Khalil, 2000): in collectivist societies, businesses can leverage peer recommendations and social endorsements to enhance their advertising strategies. The interconnectedness of these cultural factors shows that cultural preferences influence multiple aspects of consumer behavior; hence, businesses must navigate these influences to effectively engage culturally diverse consumer groups.

Factor 2: Transaction Dynamics Ensemble

The findings of Factor 2 pertain to the cultural aspects of consumer behavior in social commerce and highlight the significance—that is, the cultural dimensions that shape various facets of transaction dynamics. The three variables explored by this factor (customer service and payment systems, impulse purchases and spending habits, and online shopping behavior) all demonstrate the interplay between cultural influences and consumer behavior in the context of social commerce. The first variable, customer service and payment systems, reveals that cultural norms shape expectations related to customer service and preferred payment methods. This includes expectations around the level of formality or informality in communication, the importance attached to personalized service, and the trust associated with specific payment methods, which can vary across cultures. This finding implies that businesses operating in social commerce spaces must be sensitive to these cultural differences and adapt their customer service practices and payment systems accordingly (Bugshan & Attar, 2020).

The second variable, impulse purchases and spending habits, highlights the intricate relationship between cultural dimensions and individual attitudes toward

consumption. Cultural influences on impulsivity can manifest in various ways, with some cultures emphasizing careful consideration before making a purchase and others embracing more impulsive buying behaviors. Additionally, cultural attitudes toward saving, spending, and the perception of material possessions shape individual spending habits in the context of social commerce. Businesses' marketing strategies should reflect the cultural attitudes around consumption in their target markets.

The third variable, online shopping behavior, highlights the significant impact of cultural factors on individuals' participation in online transactions. Cultural attitudes toward technology, trust in e-commerce platforms, and the preference for personalized experiences are crucial determinants of online shopping behavior. Additionally, the cultural variation in social validation and peer recommendations influences individuals' inclinations toward online shopping (Hu et al., 2016). Meeting consumer preferences and expectations in diverse cultural settings requires businesses to grasp these cultural nuances in order to customize the online shopping experience.

Factor 3: Marketplace Values Quartet

The findings of Factor 3 regarding "Marketplace Values Quartet" explain the interplay between cultural foundations and consumer behavior within the social commerce realm. The four variables in the quartet—namely, product discovery and social share, product quality, satisfaction and price comparisons, and sustainability and ethical consumption—highlight the different dimensions that influenced cultural values. Product discovery and social sharing refers to the role of cultural principles in forming how individuals determine and share products on social commerce platforms; the cultural feature of sharing helps reveal whether product sharing is driven more by personal expression or communal values. Businesses operating in markets with diverse cultures must adapt their product discovery features to reflect both the cultural preferences of individuals and community values.

The second variable is product satisfaction and quality, which distinguish the status of cultural expectations around product quality, robustness, and aesthetics. Understanding these cultural distinctions aids businesses in tailoring their products to meet consumer expectations, which in turn can improve customer satisfaction and loyalty.

The third variable is price comparison, which highlights cultural attitudes toward consumer price comparison and reveals the influence of cultural values on commerce principles. Given that some cultures prioritize price above all, understanding the cultural lens that people use to evaluate the value of products is crucial for businesses to implement effective pricing strategies (Song et al., 2018).

The fourth variable, sustainability and ethical consumption, deepens this understanding that cultural values impact consumer behavior. Specifically, this variable shows the influence of environmental awareness, social responsibility, and ethical considerations. These factors have more or less cultural significance depending on the context, but there is an overall trend toward socially responsible consumption that transcends cultural boundaries. As a result, businesses that want to align with consumer values of sustainability and ethical consumption need to understand these cultural inclinations.

Finally, the “Marketplace Values Quartet” shows how cultural factors influence consumer behavior in social commerce. Crucially, businesses must understand and adapt to the landscape of their customers to create marketing strategies that resonate with the cultural preferences of their consumer base regarding product discovery, quality, pricing, and ethical considerations. This approach encourages consumer engagement, helping businesses achieve long-term success in the changing world of social commerce. When it comes to sustainability and ethical consumption, recognizing and aligning with values is a significant factor for promoting positive consumer behavior.

Given these variables, it is evident that integrating sustainability practices and ethical considerations into their offerings helps businesses resonate with consumers who prioritize these values, thereby building meaningful connections and brand loyalty. In essence, our analysis of Factor 3 underscores the imperative to navigate the complex interplay between cultural aspects and consumer behavior in social commerce. Embracing cultural diversity and tailoring strategies to align with cultural values within the Marketplace Values Quartet foster positive consumer engagement and long-term success in the dynamic social commerce landscape.

Conclusion

Summary of Key Findings

This research investigates the influence of cultural dimensions on consumer behavior in Tehran with the aim of providing valuable insights about the dynamics of social commerce and its impact on consumer behavior, particularly how unique cultural factors shape purchasing decisions. By categorizing 10 variables into three key areas—the link of cultural perception, the dynamic group of transactions, and the four market values—we highlighted certain cultural dynamics that distinguish Iranian consumer behavior from other societies. These findings nuance sociological understandings of the interaction between culture and consumer behavior, especially within the context of social commerce.

The findings emphasized the significance of the “Cultural Perception Nexus,” which demonstrates how cultural attitudes shape consumers’ perceptions of social media platforms and their interactions with marketers. In business discussions, trust is a central element of business discussions that shifts according to cultural context. In most markets, shopping convenience is a primary consumer preference, yet most Tehrani consumers prioritize personal interactions and trust-building measures such as direct communication with and getting to know sellers before making a transaction. Therefore, cultivating trust with sellers in online transactions is a key factor that can increase consumer satisfaction and loyalty in Tehran’s online market environments.

Another important aspect of our findings stems from the “Transaction Dynamics Ensemble.” This factor emphasizes the role of cultural norms in shaping preferences regarding customer service and payment systems, impulse purchases and spending habits, and online shopping behavior. Cultural norms, diverse communication styles, and distinct preferences for payment methods collectively moderate people’s

expectations and behaviors during customer service interactions. At the same time, cultural attitudes towards consumption and savings have a significant impact on people's spending habits and online shopping behavior patterns. The multifaceted nature of these variables reveals the complex relationship between cultural influences and transaction dynamics. This suggests that Iranian consumers clearly prefer traditional payment systems over online payments, digital wallets, and newer financial technologies, indicating their cautious approach to online transactions. Businesses need to understand these cultural dimensions and familiarize themselves with their strategies to respond to diverse cultural preferences for effective engagement and consumer satisfaction.

Finally, the "Marketplace Values Quartet" clarifies the critical role of cultural values in shaping consumer decisions around price, quality, and ethical concerns. The findings indicate that Iranian consumers showed great interest in product quality and ethical consumption. Promoting products that meet ethical consumption and sustainability standards may particularly resonate with such market segments.

The findings of this research align with Baudrillard's theory of consumption by affirming that modern consumption is driven not only by functional needs but also by the symbolic meanings attached to goods. In Tehran's social commerce landscape, consumers utilize their purchasing power to express identity, status, and alignment with cultural values. This perspective reinforces the idea that consumption extends beyond mere economic transactions and is instead a complex interaction of symbols and meanings. Social commerce platforms provide consumers with the means to amplify these symbolic expressions, thereby transforming their shopping experiences into acts of self-expression.

Another point revealed by the findings is the distinctiveness of Iranian consumer behavior compared to other markets. While globalization has influenced some degree of homogenization in consumer behaviors, Iranian cultural values have profoundly shaped the consumption patterns of Tehranian consumers. Their behavior reflects a unique blend of traditional cultural values and modern digital practices, offering a compelling example of how local context shapes consumption patterns.

Limitations of the Study

This study of cultural dynamics in social commerce and its impact on consumer behavior and interaction patterns has several limitations. First, data collected from participants on specific social media platforms may not fully represent the diversity of consumer interactions in different digital environments. Second, reliance on self-reported data can introduce potential biases, as respondents may not accurately disclose their behaviors or attitudes. Third, focusing on a specific geographical location such as Tehran potentially limits the generalizability of the findings across cultural contexts. Finally, as technology rapidly evolves, it is likely that current forms of social commerce will become obsolete in the future, necessitating that the results of this research be updated. These limitations highlight areas for future research to further explore the complex interplay between cultural factors and social commerce dynamics in different contexts.

Suggestions for Future Research Directions in Social Commerce and Cultural Dynamics

Future research directions in social commerce and cultural dynamics should take note of the following points:

- First, future studies should deepen examination of cultural dimensions affecting consumer behavior in different social commerce environments, especially in non-western societies like Tehran.
- Second, longitudinal studies may provide insights into how cultural dynamics change over time as technology increasingly integrates into business, allowing researchers to track changes in consumer behavior and preferences.
- Third, interdisciplinary approaches combining sociology, cultural studies, psychology, economics, and information technology will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the complex interaction between culture, technology, and consumer behavior.
- Finally, future research in the field of social commerce and cultural dynamics should better examine the evolving role of emerging technologies, such as AI-based personalization and blockchain, in shaping consumer behavior in diverse cultural contexts.

Reference

Algharabat, R. S., & Rana, N. P. (2021). Social commerce in emerging markets and its impact on online community engagement. *Information Systems Frontiers*, 23(6), 1499–1520. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10796-020-10041-4>

Backhaus, K., Erichson, B., Gensler, S., Weiber, R., & Weiber, T. (2023). *Multivariate analysis: An application-oriented introduction*. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-40411-6>

Baudrillard, J. (1998). *The consumer society: Myths and structures*. SAGE. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526401502>

Baudrillard, J. (2001). The system of objects. In M. Poster (Ed.), *Jean Baudrillard: Selected writings* (2nd ed., pp. 13–31). Stanford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781503619630-004>

Baudrillard, J. (2008). Simulacra and simulations. In S. Seidman & J. C. Alexander (Eds.), *The new social theory reader* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Belolipetskaya, A., Golovina, T., Polyanin, A., & Vertakova, Y. (2020). Transformation of the personnel competency model in the context of the transition to the digital economy. *E3S Web of Conferences*, 164, Article 09005. <https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/202016409005>

Boström, M. (2020). The social life of mass and excess consumption. *Environmental Sociology*, 6(3), 268–278. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23251042.2020.1755001>

Brahma, A., & Dutta, R. (2020). Role of social media and e-commerce for business entrepreneurship. *International Journal of Scientific Research in Computer Science, Engineering and Information Technology*, 6(6), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.32628/CSEIT206559>

Bugshan, H., & Attar, R. W. (2020). Social commerce information sharing and their impact on consumers. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 153, Article 119875. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2019.119875>

Busalim, A., Hollebeek, L. D., & Lynn, T. (2024). The effect of social commerce attributes on customer engagement: an empirical investigation. *Internet Research*, 34(7), 187–214. <https://doi.org/10.1108/INTR-03-2022-0165>

Chen, Y. Y., Lai, F. W., Goh, K. N., & Daud, S. C. (2013). The effect of integrating social plugins into e-commerce website: A study on online consumer behaviour. In *Proceedings of the 7th International Conference on Ubiquitous Information Management and Communication* (Article 56). ACM. <https://doi.org/10.1145/2448556.2448612>

Dwivedi, Y. K., Ismagilova, E., Hughes, D. L., Carlson, J., Filieri, R., Jacobson, J., Jain, V., Karjaluoto, H., Kefi, H., Krishen, A. S., Kumar, V., Rahman, M. M., Raman, R., Rauschnabel, P. A., Rowley, J., Salo, J., Tran, G. A., & Wang, Y. (2021). Setting the future of digital and social media marketing research: Perspectives and research propositions. *International Journal of Information Management*, 59, Article 102168. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2020.102168>

Essien, E. O. (2024). Deconstructing hypertruth: Baudrillard's semiotic analysis. *The International Journal of the Image*, 15(2), 19–36. <https://doi.org/10.18848/2154-8560/CGP/v15i02/19-36>

Griffiths, A. (2018). Trade marks and the consumer society. *SCRIPTed*, 15(2), 209–241. <https://doi.org/10.2966/scrip.150218.209>

Habib, M. M. (2018). Culture and consumerism in Jean Baudrillard: A postmodern perspective. *Asian Social Science*, 14(9), 43–46. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v14n9p43>

Hajli, M. (2013). A research framework for social commerce adoption. *Information Management & Computer Security*, 21(3), 144–154. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IMCS-04-2012-0024>

Ham, J., Li, S., Looi, J., & Eastin, M. S. (2024). Virtual humans as social actors: Investigating user perceptions of virtual humans' emotional expression on social media. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 155, Article 108161. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2024.108161>

Hamermesh, D. S. (1993). [Review of *The overworked American: The unexpected decline of leisure*, by J. B. Schor]. *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 46(2). <https://doi.org/10.2307/2524892>

Horng, S.-M., & Wu, C.-L. (2020). How behaviors on social network sites and online social capital influence social commerce intentions. *Information and Management*, 57(2), Article 103176. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.im.2019.103176>

Hu, X., Chen, X., & Davison, R. M. (2019). Social support, source credibility, social influence, and impulsive purchase behavior in social commerce. *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, 23(3), 297–327. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10864415.2019.1619905>

Hu, X., Huang, Q., Zhong, X., Davison, R. M., & Zhao, D. (2016). The influence of peer characteristics and technical features of a social shopping website on a consumer's purchase intention. *International Journal of Information Management*, 36(6B), 1218–1230. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2016.08.005>

Huang, X., & Huo, Y. (2021). Research on decision-making behavior of social e-commerce marketing subject. *International Journal of Frontiers in Sociology*, 3(15), 152–158. <https://doi.org/10.25236/IJFS.2021.031519>

Ignjatović, J., & Filipović, S. (2022). A critical review of the rise of the neoliberal concept in economic policy. *Socioloski Pregled*, 56(1), 90–119. <https://doi.org/10.5937/socpreg56-35619>

Jain, V. (2014). *The impact of social commerce on consumer behaviour: With special reference to F-commerce*. SSRN. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2403898>

Khalil, E. L. (2000). Symbolic products: Prestige, pride and identity goods. *Theory and Decision*, 49(1), 53–77. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1005223607947>

Kim, Y., Chang, Y., Wong, S. F., & Park, M.-C. (2014). Customer attribution of service failure and its impact in social commerce environment. *International Journal of Electronic Customer Relationship Management*, 8(1–3), 136–158. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJECRM.2014.066890>

Lavoye, V., Tarkiainen, A., Sipilä, J., & Mero, J. (2023). More than skin-deep: The influence of presence dimensions on purchase intentions in augmented reality shopping. *Journal of Business Research*, 169, Article 114247. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2023.114247>

Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The production of space* (D. Nicholson-Smith, Trans.). Blackwell. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203132357-14> (Originally published in French).

Lim, W. M., & Rasul, T. (2022). Customer engagement and social media: Revisiting the past to inform the future. *Journal of Business Research*, 148, 325–342. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2022.04.068>

Macat Team. (2017). *An analysis of Karl Marx's Capital*. Macat Library. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781912282258>

McLuhan, M. (2008). The medium is the message. In C. D. Mortensen (Ed.), *Communication theory* (pp. 390–402). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315080918-31>

Mendoza-Tello, J. C., Mora, H., Pujol-López, F. A., & Lytras, M. D. (2018). Social commerce as a driver to enhance trust and intention to use cryptocurrencies for electronic payments. *IEEE Access*, 6, 50737–50751. <https://doi.org/10.1109/ACCESS.2018.2869359>

Neuman, W. R. (2000). The impact of the new media. In W. L. Bennett & R. M. Entman (Eds.), *Mediated politics: Communication in the future of democracy* (pp. 299–320). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511613852.015>

Nilsson, M., & Mattes, J. (2015). The spatiality of trust: Factors influencing the creation of trust and the role of face-to-face contacts. *European Management Journal*, 33(4), 230–244. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emj.2015.01.002>

Nimon, K. F., & Oswald, F. L. (2013). Understanding the results of multiple linear regression: Beyond standardized regression coefficients. *Organizational Research Methods*, 16(4), 650–674. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428113493929>

Panizzut, N., Rafi-ul-Shan, P. M., Amar, H., Sher, F., Mazhar, M. U., & Klemeš, J. J. (2021). Exploring relationship between environmentalism and consumerism in a market economy society: A structured systematic literature review. *Cleaner Engineering and Technology*, 2, Article 100047. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.clet.2021.100047>

Ranganathan, P., Pramesh, C. S., & Aggarwal, R. (2017). Common pitfalls in statistical analysis: Logistic regression. *Perspectives in Clinical Research*, 8(3), 148–151. https://doi.org/10.4103/picr.PICR_87_17

Ritzer, G., & Miles, S. (2019). The changing nature of consumption and the intensification of McDonaldisation in the digital age. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 19(1), 3–20. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1469540518818628>

Ritzer, G., & Smart, B. (2001). *Handbook of social theory*. SAGE. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781848608351>

Robert, L., Denis, A., & Hung, Y.-T. (2009). Individual swift trust and knowledge-based trust in face-to-face and virtual team members. *Journal of Management Information Systems*, 26(2), 241–279. <https://doi.org/10.2753/MIS0742-1222260210>

Schuster, C., & Yuan, K.-H. (2005). Factor analysis. In K. Kempf-Leonard (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of social measurement* (Vol. 2, pp. 1–8). Elsevier. <https://doi.org/10.1016/b0-12-369398-5/00162-6>

Shah, S. S., & Asghar, Z. (2023). Dynamics of social influence on consumption choices: A social network representation. *Heliyon*, 9(6), Article e17146. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e17146>

Shorman, S., Allaymoun, M., & Hamid, O. (2019). Developing the e-commerce model a consumer to consumer using blockchain network technique. *International Journal of Managing Information Technology*, 11(2), 55–64. <https://doi.org/10.5121/ijmit.2019.11204>

Singh, A. K., Raghuwanshi, S., Sharma, S., Khare, V., Singhal, A., Tripathi, M., & Banerjee, S. (2023). Modeling the nexus between perceived value, risk, negative marketing, and consumer trust with consumers' social cross-platform buying behaviour in India using Smart-PLS. *Journal of Law and Sustainable Development*, 11(4), Article e488. <https://doi.org/10.55908/sdgs.v11i4.488>

Song, R., Moon, S., Chen, H., & Houston, M. B. (2018). When marketing strategy meets culture: The role of culture in product evaluations. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 46(3), 384–402. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-017-0525-x>

Veblen, T. (1992). *The theory of the leisure class: An economic study in the evolution of institutions*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315135373> (Originally published 1899)

Wang, C., & Zhang, P. (2012). The evolution of social commerce: The people, management, technology, and information dimensions. *Communications of the Association for Information Systems*, 31(5), 105–127. <https://doi.org/10.17705/1cais.03105>

Wang, P., & Huang, Q. (2023). Digital influencers, social power and consumer engagement in social commerce. *Internet Research*, 33(1), 178–207. <https://doi.org/10.1108/INTR-08-2020-0467>

Warde, A. (2015). The sociology of consumption: Its recent development. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 41, 117–134. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-071913-043208>

Whalen, T. (1991). [Review of *Jean Baudrillard: From Marxism to Postmodernism and Beyond*, by D. Kellner]. *Modern Language Studies*, 21(2), 116–118. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3194878>

Wu, T., & Shao, W. (2022). How does digital economy drive industrial structure upgrading: An empirical study based on 249 prefecture-level cities in China. *PLOS ONE*, 17(11), Article e0277787. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0277787>

Wu, Y., Nambisan, S., Xiao, J., & Xie, K. (2022). Consumer resource integration and service innovation in social commerce: The role of social media influencers. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 50(3), 429–459. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-022-00837-y>

Xiang, H., Chau, K. Y., Iqbal, W., Irfan, M., & Dagar, V. (2022). Determinants of social commerce usage and online impulse purchase: Implications for business and digital revolution. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, Article 837042. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.837042>

Yin, B., Yu, Y., & Xu, X. (2021). Recent advances in consumer behavior theory: Shocks from the COVID-19 pandemic. *Behavioral Sciences*, 11(12), Article 171. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs11120171>

Zhang, H., Lu, Y., Shi, X., Tang, Z., & Zhao, Z. (2012). Mood and social presence on consumer purchase behaviour in C2C E-commerce in Chinese culture. *Electronic Markets*, 22(3), 143–154. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12525-012-0097-z>

Appendix

Table 1
Questionnaires Contains the Variables and Related Questions

No	Variables	Questions and related multiple-choice answers
1	Perception of Social Media Commerce	1. How much do you agree that you tend to prioritize shopping for local products on platforms like Facebook Marketplace because it aligns with your cultural value of supporting local businesses? Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree 2. To what extent do you believe that in your culture, the value of trust and authenticity makes you more cautious about purchasing items from unknown sellers on social media platforms compared to traditional shopping methods? Not at all Slightly Moderately Strongly Completely 3. Considering different cultural integrations with social media and shopping habits, how likely do you think cultural influences impact the shift towards online shopping in deeply integrated cultures compared to cultures where traditional shopping methods are more prevalent? Not Likely Slightly Likely Moderately Likely Quite Likely Extremely Likely 4. How much do you agree that in your cultural context, the emphasis on quality and authenticity often leads you to prioritize purchasing products from sellers with good reputations and positive reviews, irrespective of the price? Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
2	Customer Service and Payment Systems	1. In the context of a culture that values formality and directness, how would you assess if customer service interactions on social media platforms meet those expectations? Not at all Slightly Moderately Strongly Completely 2. If you come from a culture highly valuing trust and personal interaction, when evaluating online shopping, would you consider whether the return process is transparent and involves direct communication with sellers? Not at all Slightly Moderately Strongly Completely 3. If you belong to a culture where cash transactions are preferred, can you share your comfort level with digital payment systems on social media platforms? Not at all Slightly Moderately Strongly Completely 4. Considering a cultural context with high uncertainty avoidance, how would you describe your level of trust in the security measures of social media platforms for online transactions? Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

No	Variables	Questions and related multiple-choice answers
3	Product Discovery and Social Sharing	<p>1. To what extent does your cultural background influence the way you discover new products through social media as compared to traditional shopping channels? - Example: «I am more likely to discover and explore new products through social media because it aligns with my cultural values of staying connected and being exposed to diverse trends. Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree</p> <p>2. In your opinion, how much do your cultural values and preferences shape the information you encounter about products through social media compared to conventional retail experiences? - Example: «My cultural background significantly influences the types of products I engage with on social media; for instance, I prioritize sustainable and locally-made items, reflecting my cultural emphasis on environmental consciousness and supporting local businesses.» Not at all Slightly Moderately Strongly Completely</p> <p>3. Considering your cultural background, how likely are you to share product discoveries on social media platforms with others in your community or network? - Example: «Due to my cultural inclination towards communal values, I am very likely to share product discoveries on social media, especially if I believe they align with the tastes and preferences of my cultural community.» Very Unlikely Unlikely Neutral Likely Very Likely</p> <p>4. To what degree do you believe your cultural influences impact the effectiveness of social sharing in spreading product information within your social circles? - Example: «The effectiveness of social sharing in my cultural circles is very significant; my community values recommendations from within, and products that resonate with our cultural identity tend to spread quickly through social networks. Negligible Minor Moderate Significant Very Significant</p>
4	Consumer-Seller Interaction	<p>1. To what extent do you believe that purchasing from social media has influenced a more personalized and culturally tailored approach in the way companies interact with customers? Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree</p> <p>2. In your opinion, has the shift towards buying from social media platforms led to a more culturally diverse representation of products and services offered by companies? Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree</p> <p>3. To what extent do you perceive that companies on social media engage in culturally sensitive communication, considering your background and values? Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree</p> <p>4. From your perspective, has the advent of purchasing through social media resulted in a more inclusive and culturally aware customer service experience provided by companies Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree</p>

No	Variables	Questions and related multiple-choice answers
5	Influence of Social Proof and Advertising	<p>1. To what extent do cultural considerations influence your trust in information provided by social media influencers? Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree</p> <p>2. In the context of your cultural background, how significant is the impact of social proof (likes, shares, reviews) when deciding to make a purchase on social media? Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree</p> <p>3. Have you ever purchased a product based on advertising, but found it to be scarcely used, and how might cultural factors contribute to this phenomenon? Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree</p> <p>4. Considering your cultural perspective, how frequently do you find yourself purchasing a product that is more expensive than initially planned due to the influence of advertising? Not at all Slightly Moderately Strongly Completely</p>
6	Product Quality and Satisfaction	<p>1. Suppose you come from a culture that highly values craftsmanship and durability in products. You recently bought a handcrafted item advertised on social media. How much did your cultural background affect your judgment of its quality, taking into account factors like craftsmanship, material, and longevity? Not at all Slightly Moderately Strongly Completely</p> <p>2. In your culture, there might be a strong emphasis on detailed and precise information when making purchases. Reflect on a recent product you bought from social media. Did your cultural background influence how much you trusted the product's description provided by the seller in terms of accuracy and completeness? Not at all Slightly Moderately Strongly Completely</p> <p>3. Based on your cultural values regarding customer satisfaction, recall your recent experiences purchasing items through social media. How satisfied were you overall with these purchases concerning factors like meeting expectations, customer service, and cultural relevance? Not at all Slightly Moderately Strongly Completely</p> <p>4. Considering your cultural inclination towards sharing experiences and recommendations within your community, think about a product you recently purchased through social media. Would you recommend it to friends or family from your cultural background, taking into account how well it aligns with their preferences and values? Not at all Slightly Moderately Strongly Completely</p>

No	Variables	Questions and related multiple-choice answers
7	Impulse Purchases and Spending Habits	<p>1. To what extent does your cultural background influence your likelihood of making impulse purchases while browsing social media? Not at all Slightly Moderately Strongly Completely</p> <p>2. Considering your cultural perspective, how significantly has social media influenced your overall spending habits? Not at all Slightly Moderately Strongly Completely</p> <p>3. From a cultural standpoint, how often do you find yourself buying something solely because it is inexpensive, even if you don't necessarily need it? Not at all Slightly Moderately Strongly Completely</p> <p>4. In relation to your cultural background, how frequently do you end up purchasing more than you need due to the low price of an item? Very Rarely Rarely Occasionally Often Very Often</p>
8	Price Comparison	<p>1. To what extent does your cultural background influence your tendency to impulsively compare prices between products on social media? Not at all Slightly Moderately Strongly Completely</p> <p>2. Considering your cultural perspective, how likely are you to engage in impulsive price comparisons between social media and traditional markets? Very Unlikely Unlikely Neutral Likely Very Likely</p> <p>3. From a cultural standpoint, how often do you find yourself making impulsive purchase decisions based on the price differences you observe on social media? Very Rarely Rarely Occasionally Often Very Often</p> <p>4. In relation to your cultural background, how much does the price variation between social media and traditional markets impact your impulsive buying behavior? Not at all Slightly Moderately Strongly Completely</p>
9	Online Shopping Behavior	<p>1. To what extent does your cultural background influence your online shopping behavior, particularly in terms of exploring a variety of products available? Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree</p> <p>2. Considering your cultural perspective, how likely are you to make impulsive online purchases when you have free time? Very Unlikely Unlikely Neutral Likely Very Likely</p> <p>3. From a cultural standpoint, how often do you find yourself influenced by online shopping trends or recommendations from your cultural community? Very Rarely Rarely Occasionally Often Very Often</p> <p>4. In relation to your cultural background, how much does the convenience of online shopping impact your overall buying behavior? Not at all Slightly Moderately Strongly Completely</p>

No	Variables	Questions and related multiple-choice answers
10	Sustainability and Ethical Consumption	<p>1. To what extent does your cultural background influence your sense of empowerment in making a positive difference through your consumption choices? Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree</p> <p>2. Considering your cultural perspective, how important is it for you to be aware of the environmental impact of the products or services you purchase? Not Important Slightly Important Moderately Important Very Important Extremely Important</p> <p>3. From a cultural standpoint, how willing are you to pay extra for eco-friendly or environmentally sustainable products? Not Willing at All Slightly Willing Moderately Willing Very Willing Extremely Willing</p> <p>4. In relation to your cultural background, how much have you changed your consumption habits in the past year to protect the environment? Not at all Slightly Moderately Significantly Completely</p>



BOOK REVIEW

Recent Developments in the Anthropology of Digital Media: Exploring the Influencer Phenomenon

Review of Emily Hund. *The Influencer Industry: The Quest for Authenticity on Social Media*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023; Johanna Arnesson and Hanna Reinikainen (Eds.) *Influencer Politics: At the Intersection of Personal, Political, and Promotional*. Boston: De Gruyter, 2024.

Natalia A. Chernyaeva

Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera) of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Saint Petersburg, Russia

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The study is supported by the Russian Science Foundation, Project No. 23-78-10079, <https://rscf.ru/project/23-78-10079/>

The books under review explore the phenomenon of influencers, i.e., digital content creators, whose fame and following in social media are commodified mainly by brands and, increasingly, by politicians. Although the geography of research in these works is limited to the USA and the Nordic countries, the frameworks they offer are relevant to understanding the digital influencer culture globally. In Russia, where influencer marketing is gaining traction in many spheres, there has yet to be a comprehensive study of the influencer economy. To some extent, the analysis provided in the reviewed books fills this gap, as they resonate beyond the original Western context. There have been studies of influencers from a qualitative social analysis perspective before. Notably, Crystal Abidin's book, *Internet Celebrity: Understanding Fame Online* (2018) examines the evolution of online celebrity culture, tracing how it developed into the phenomenon of influencers, whom she defines as “vocational, sustained, and highly branded social media stars” (Abidin, 2018, p. 71). However, several key aspects of modern influencer culture have taken shape recently, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, necessitating a fresh perspective.

Received 15 March 2024

Accepted 1 April 2024

Published online 30 April 2025

© 2024 Natalia A. Chernyaeva

chernyaeva@kunstkamera.ru

Emily Hund's book, *The Influencer Industry: The Quest for Authenticity on Social Media*, offers "a critical history of the influencer industry's formative years in the United States" (Hund, 2023, p. 6). The history spans roughly two decades: it starts with the global financial crisis of 2008, which spurred a significant change in the media industry, causing a crisis of confidence in traditional institutions and allowing new actors, i.e., bloggers and early influencers, to carve out a niche previously occupied by professional journalists. Hund's own story of being a recent college graduate in the late 2000s, looking for a journalist job at a fashion magazine, not finding any, and discovering that a thirteen-year-old fashion blogger was hired to write a column at the magazine, in which she worked as an unpaid intern, was, in her words, "a microscopic part of a word-shifting pattern of events" (p. 5). The book takes the story to today's multibillion-dollar influencer economy affecting people's lives in profound and multifarious ways.

The book's author is a research affiliate at the Center on Digital Culture and Society at the University of Pennsylvania; she holds a PhD in communication studies and has a background in sociology. For her study, she employed methods from qualitative social sciences, including interviews with principal stakeholders and participant observation at industry events. She supplemented these methods with the discourse analysis of changing public views on influencers and influencer culture across many media outlets. Thus, her study connects the outside and inside views of the industry. It examines important economic, social, and technological factors underpinning the advent and growth of the influencer industry, including the neoliberal shifts in the labor market, "the gig economy" and economic precarity, disproportionately affecting women, and the emergence of social media platforms that allowed for sharing information online. It also gives voice to the industry's actors, who looked for ways to compensate for disruptive economic factors by capitalizing on emerging technological opportunities.

In Chapter 1, "Groundwork," Hund examines the "intellectual history of influence" (p. 14), tracing its origins to pre-digital and even pre-modern eras, particularly ancient Greek theories of rhetoric and persuasion, as well as Shakespeare's reflections on influence. This search for ancient origins is more a tribute to disciplinary tradition than a necessity for contemporary analysis. However, investigating more recent developments in the history of influence proves instructive. The "two-step flow of communication" model, developed by Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955), established, according to Hund, "the vocabulary with which people discuss influence." More recently, academic reflections on celebrity culture and media in the 1990s introduced the concept of the "attention economy." The emergence of Web 2.0, which enabled new forms of online attention-seeking, gave rise to the notion of "micro-celebrity."

Hund then shifts focus to the contemporary influencer industry, which emerged at the intersection of several key developments: the advent of software and social media, which enabled individuals without technical expertise to publish content online; the societal emphasis on entrepreneurialism; the neoliberal logic of self-branding; marketers' and advertisers' demand for "authentic" content; and the development of metrics platforms that facilitate the measurement and monetization of influence. The chapter concludes with an exploration of two key aspects of the influencer industry: first, the debate surrounding digital labor—whether it is empowering, exploitative, or

both—and second, an analysis of what constitutes “authenticity,” a highly sought-after commodity in the transactions between influencers and brands.

Chapter 2, “Setting the Terms of a Transactional Industry,” focuses on the emergence, in the late 2000s, of a cottage industry of the marketing middlemen “that angled to solidify, streamline and profit from the influencer-advertiser relationship” (p. 38). These digital marketing firms connect bloggers and brands and essentially set up transactional terms that define the industry language and norms. Hund based her discussion of evolving practices measuring digital influence and the industry’s rules on her interviews with executives from numerous influencer marketing agencies, who described their companies’ operational models. At first, companies relied on relatively straightforward data, such as the number of followers but then moved to the “engagement” metrics assessed by the number of clicks, comments, purchases, etc. She further discusses the tension between the influencer’s desire “to be true to themselves” and create authentic content and the necessity to be strategic and maintain a coherent, predictable, and easily understandable personal brand.

In Chapter 3, “Making Influence Efficient,” the author examines the development of the influencer industry in the mid-to-late 2010s, during which its infrastructure became well-defined. Key advancements included refining metrics for measuring digital influence, establishing pricing systems, and optimizing selection processes to identify the most suitable influencers for specific advertising campaigns. A significant transformation during this time was the industry’s shift toward lifestyle content, which broadened the range of topics influencers could engage with and expanded the spectrum of brands with which they could collaborate. Additionally, technological innovations enabled influencers to generate revenue by embedding clickable links to retailer websites, thereby bypassing the need for formal brand contracts. This development facilitated the immediate and efficient commercialization of content. However, despite these monetization opportunities, content creators did not necessarily gain greater creative freedom.

The emergence of image-centric platforms such as Instagram exerted immense pressure on influencers to refine their visual aesthetics to align with the platform’s distinctive stylistic norms, described by Hund as a “particular platform vernacular” (p. 88). The author highlights the increasingly disciplined aesthetics of influencers, which culminated in “a singular look that came to be colloquially known as “Instagram face” (pp. 90–91). This aesthetic homogenization significantly compromised the industry’s pursuit of authentic self-expression. Nevertheless, it did not hinder the industry’s rapid economic expansion, which reached its peak during this period.

The influencer industry experienced significant growth in the late 2010s; however, this expansion was accompanied by increasing public concern regarding the potentially harmful and manipulative aspects of influencer culture and social media. Chapter 4, “Revealing and Repositioning the Machinations of Influence,” examines the backlash against influencers during this period, which led to substantial industry changes. These changes affected influencers’ relationships with brands and prompted the development of new social media tools to enhance transparency.

A primary challenge faced by marketing agencies, brands, and the general public was the prevalence of “fake followers,” which undermined the credibility of influencer marketing. In response, marketers implemented sophisticated software to identify potential metrics fraud. Additionally, there was a growing preference for individuals with smaller followings—commonly referred to as micro-influencers and nano-influencers—who were perceived as fostering more authentic and intimate connections with their audiences. Concerns over transparency extended to governmental bodies, which criticized influencers, including high-profile celebrities like Kim Kardashian, for failing to disclose sponsored content clearly. In response, social media platforms introduced disclosure tools that enabled influencers to tag sponsoring brands, thereby improving transparency. These developments contributed to the increasing precarity of influencers’ careers, who felt the need to expand their businesses within and beyond social media (p. 126).

Chapter 5, “The Industry Becomes Boundaryless,” explores the transformations of the influencer culture following the COVID-19 pandemic and the George Floyd protests of 2020. During this period, people spent 10 to 20 percent more time on social media, looking there for information rather than in traditional outlets. Many industry participants abandoned their traditionally apolitical stance and engaged in open discussions on inequality and social justice. As Hund notes, the industry shifted its focus from “what to buy” to “what to think” (p. 131). This transition toward explicitly political content has led to so-called “genuinfluencers” (p. 138), bloggers who provide information and advice rather than promoting products. The early 2020s also witnessed multiple attempts by politicians to leverage influencers in their electoral campaigns, a practice that some media experts argued bordered on “propaganda” (p. 146).

Conceptions of “authentic” content underwent another reevaluation, now driven by changing social media algorithms. The rise of TikTok, which encouraged users to share video reels with an “unpolished” aesthetic, rendered the previously dominant, highly curated brand imagery obsolete. Seeking less edited and more “real” content, many brands began incorporating everyday individuals into their advertising campaigns by offering various incentives so that more people “become potential channels for commerce” (p. 149). Hund then analyzes how the ever-changing formulas for successful content, the opacity of social media algorithms, the lack of a support system within the industry, and the absence of clearly articulated ethical standards have pushed the precarious nature of the influencer job to the extreme. The internal resistance of digital workers grew; many influencers interviewed by the author in earlier periods left this business in the post-COVID years.

Chapter 6, “The Cost of Being Real,” serves as a conclusion to the book in multiple ways. First, it synthesizes key themes explored throughout the study, including the relentless commercialization of the influencer industry and the associated potential for exploitation within influencer labor, the conceptualization of authenticity as both a digital commodity and an “industrial construct,” and the significant shift in power away from individual influencers toward media and technology corporations in recent years.

Second, the author concludes the study by offering recommendations to enhance industry transparency and accountability while mitigating exploitation

and inequality. She outlines several imperatives, including the need to regulate social media companies, establish professional organizations for influencers, and shift among brands and marketers toward values-driven creativity rather than ambivalent efficiency.

The transition from a research-based analysis to an advocacy-oriented stance is unexpected in academic work. However, it may be justified given the immediacy and contemporary relevance of the issues discussed. Nevertheless, a key limitation of this chapter is the ambiguity regarding the intended audience of these recommendations. The author does not explicitly address who should be responsible for implementing these proposed changes—whether it is Big Tech companies, brands, marketers, or another entity. Consequently, this question remains unresolved within the text.

The monograph *Influencer Politics: At the Intersection of Personal, Political, and Promotional* extends the discussion of influencer culture and its intersection with politics, initiated by Hund (Arnesson & Reinikainen, 2024). Political actors adopting influencer strategies on social media, such as interactivity and self-branding, are hardly the news. However, the book's primary focus is on influencers, who are traditionally embedded in commercial spheres and gradually shift towards political content. Part One examines various intersections between influencer culture and formal political institutions and practices, including elections and political parties. Part Two explores the seemingly unlikely convergence of beauty and lifestyle bloggers with public debates on pressing political issues.

The contributors to this volume, affiliated with leading research universities in Northern Europe, have diverse academic backgrounds in social sciences and communication studies. Their methodological approach is grounded in traditional and digital ethnography, as they conducted interviews with key actors in the influencer industry and performed qualitative analysis of blogs and posts, including visual images. The book opens with an Introduction announcing the main topics of the volume: the politicization of influencers, the tensions between politics and commercialism, “authenticity” as a “messy concept,” which nevertheless is perceived as a key characteristic of influencers both within and outside the influencer culture, and the ambivalent relationship between authenticity, self-branding, and gender. The book comprises nine chapters, of which only four are included in the current review. In addition to space considerations the author selected chapters with maximum methodological and conceptual novelty.

Johanna Arnesson's chapter, “From Beauty to Ballots,” investigates a case from the Swedish political landscape in which two prominent beauty bloggers conducted interviews with parliamentary party leaders in the 2022 election. The public discourse surrounding these interviews, as reflected in both traditional and social media, revealed conflicting expectations regarding the role of influencers in political discussions. On the one hand, there was an expectation that influencers should maintain objectivity and impartiality when engaging with political topics to live up to the standards set by professional journalism. Simultaneously, however, influencers were expected to retain their subjective and authentic voices to preserve the trust of their audiences. Consequently, the involvement of these bloggers in political discourse was perceived as both a potential asset and a threat to political interests.

Nils S. Borchert, in his chapter “The Influencer Political Communicators Dream Of,” examines the findings of his research on political communicators representing major parliamentary parties in Germany and their engagement with influencers. The term “political communicators” refers to professionals responsible for managing external communication on behalf of political parties. Through a qualitative content analysis, Borchert identifies seven key characteristics of the *ideal influencer* as envisioned by political communicators. According to his findings, “the influencer political communicators dream of, breaks down complex political issues, bows to the dignity of the political, handles interactions with followers, is passionate, authentic, low-maintenance, and lenient with political communicators” (p. 63). Borchert challenges the arguments of several scholars who highlight the risks influencer collaborations pose to democratic processes, particularly in electoral campaigns. He contends that the absence of financial compensation for influencers participating in political campaigns—a seemingly universal practice in German elections—mitigates concerns about the potential for buying opinions and votes.

In their chapter, “Greenfluencers and Environmental Advocacy,” Ida Vikøren Andersen and Moa Eriksson Krutrök explore an emerging subset of influencers advocating for more environmentally sustainable lifestyles. Drawing on a relatively small sample of influencers from Norway and Sweden, they identify key rhetorical strategies used by environmental bloggers to promote sustainable ways of living.

One such strategy, “*feel-good sustainability*,” encourages users to help the environment “through manageable everyday actions, such as reducing meat consumption, recycling, and buying eco-friendly clothes” (pp. 110–111). Bloggers employing this approach appeal to individual well-being, suggesting that eco-friendly products contribute to improved health and personal growth.

A more radical approach, which the authors call “*transformative sustainability*,” promotes deeper ecological consciousness. This strategy urges audiences to reduce consumption by repairing, altering, and repurposing garments. While the emphasis remains on individual actions, the influencers using this approach place primary responsibility for environmental problems on politicians and advocate for policy changes.

Finally, the “*condemn and commend sustainability*” strategy encourages consumers to leverage their power to pressure brands and businesses into adopting more sustainable practices. The authors highlight Swedish writer and activist Johanna Leymann as an example of this approach. Leymann, whose *Slow Fashion Podcast* has recently gained traction, critiques the idea that individual consumers should bear the brunt of responsibility. Instead, she argues that blame should be directed at the true culprits: the billion-dollar fashion industry with its massive environmental footprint, the mass media perpetuating fast fashion, and policymakers failing to enforce meaningful regulations.

In their chapter “Tears and Body Insecurities,” Louise Yung Nielsen and Mette Lykke Nielsen turn to a theme that, at first glance, seems unrelated to politics. They explore the performance of emotions in the mainstream blogs of six Danish influencers devoted to motherhood. Their study focuses on two specific types of visual images

that have recently gained popularity in influencer culture: the “crying selfie” and “confessional body” images.

The “crying selfie,” characterized by a close-up of a person with red eyes and visible tears, has become a widespread trend among internet celebrities. The “confessional body image” typically consists of two selfies posted side by side: in one, the influencer poses to highlight their most flattering or “fit” appearance; in the other, they relax their body to reveal a less idealized version of themselves. As both types of images are prevalent in the blogs of the mothers studied, the authors analyze the politics of visibility underpinning these representations of motherhood and femininity.

Historically, women have fought for the recognition of their private domestic labor. Mainstream female influencers not only make the work of housekeeping and child-rearing visible but also capitalize on this visibility. However, the authors hesitate to frame this phenomenon as a straightforward feminist victory, instead conceptualizing it in post-feminist terms. When female influencers post crying selfies to depict the emotional labor of motherhood, the meanings of these images are highly contextual. While such representations may broaden stereotypical notions of normative femininity, they also contribute to the commodification of emotions on social media. The authors conclude that digital spaces serve as dynamic platforms “where individuals constantly negotiate their identities, transcend traditional gender roles, and reshape our understanding of the feminist project in the 21st century” (p. 136).

References

- Abidin, C. (2018). *Internet celebrity: Understanding fame online*. Emerald. <https://doi.org/10.1108/9781787560765>
- Arnesson, J., & Reinikainen, H. (Eds.). (2024). *Influencer politics: At the intersection of personal, political, and promotional*. De Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111036106>
- Katz, E., & Lazarsfeld, P. (1955). *Personal influence: The part played by people in the flow of mass communications*. Free Press.
- Hund, E. (2023). *The influencer industry: The quest for authenticity on social media*. Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1353/book.110091>



AMENDMENT

Amendment to the article “So the Last Will Be First”: Cancel Culture as an Instrument of Symbolic Policy

Daniil A. Anikin

Saratov State University, Saratov, Russia; Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, Moscow, Russia

Dina D. Ivanova

Ural Federal University, Yekaterinburg, Russia; Saratov State Technical University, Saratov, Russia

The article “‘So the Last Will Be First’: Cancel Culture as an Instrument of Symbolic Policy” by Daniil A. Anikin & Dina D. Ivanova <https://doi.org/10.15826/csp.2024.8.4.302> published in the Vol. 8, No. 4 of *Changing Societies & Personalities* should include an amendment to be applied on the page 847. This amendment is made to rectify the inaccuracy concerning the affiliation of the second author. Accordingly, the name and affiliation of the second author should read as follows:

Dina D. Ivanova

Ural Federal University, Yekaterinburg, Russia; Saratov State Technical University, Saratov, Russia



AMENDMENT

Amendment to the article Digital Age Pedagogy: How European and Asian Business School Students Perceive Competence-Oriented Education

Pensri Jaroenwanit

Khon Kaen University, Thailand

Desislava Serafimova

University of Economics, Varna, Bulgaria

Pongsutti Phuensane

Khon Kaen University, Thailand

The article “Digital Age Pedagogy: How European and Asian Business School Students Perceive Competence-Oriented Education” by Pensri Jaroenwanit, Desislava Serafimova, & Pongsutti Phuensane <https://doi.org/10.15826/csp.2024.8.4.310> published in the Vol. 8, No. 4 of *Changing Societies & Personalities* should include an amendment to be applied on the page 1006. This amendment is made to rectify the inaccuracy concerning the order in which the authors are listed. Accordingly, the list of authors should read as follows:

Pensri Jaroenwanit

Khon Kaen University, Thailand

Desislava Serafimova

University of Economics, Varna, Bulgaria

Pongsutti Phuensane

Khon Kaen University, Thailand

Received 28 December 2024

Published online 30 April 2025



ETHICAL CODE

FOR JOURNAL EDITORS

We ask all journal editors to make every reasonable effort to adhere to the following ethical code for *Changing Societies & Personalities* journal articles that are worthy of peer review:

- Journal editors should be accountable for everything published in their journals meaning that they should strive to meet the needs of readers and authors; strive to constantly improve their journal; have processes in place to assure the quality of the material they publish; champion freedom of expression; maintain the integrity of the academic record; preclude business needs from compromising intellectual and ethical standards; always be willing to publish corrections, clarifications, retractions and apologies when needed.
- Journal editors should give unbiased consideration to each manuscript submitted for consideration for publication, and should judge each on its merits, without regard to race, religion, nationality, sex, seniority, or institutional affiliation of the author(s).
- Journal editors' decisions to accept or reject a paper for publication should be based on the paper's importance, originality and clarity, and the study's validity and its relevance to the remit of the journal. Editors should not reverse decisions to accept submissions unless serious problems are identified with the submission.
- Journal editors must ensure that all published reports and reviews of research have been reviewed by suitably qualified reviewers (including statistical review where appropriate), and ensure that non-peer-reviewed sections of their journal are clearly identified.
- Journal editors must keep the peer-review process confidential. The editor and any editorial staff of the journal must not disclose any information about a submitted manuscript to anyone other than the corresponding author, reviewers, potential reviewers, other editorial advisers, and the publisher, as appropriate.
- If a journal editor receives a claim that a submitted article is under consideration elsewhere or has already been published, then he or she has a duty to investigate the matter with *CS&P* Editorial Board.
- An editor should take reasonably responsive measures when ethical complaints have been presented concerning a submitted manuscript or published paper. Such measures will generally include contacting the author of the manuscript or paper and giving due consideration of the respective complaint or claims made.

-
- Journal editors may reject a submitted manuscript without resort to formal peer review if they consider the manuscript to be inappropriate for the journal and outside its scope.
 - Journal editors should make all reasonable effort to process submitted manuscripts in an efficient and timely manner.
 - Journal editors should arrange for responsibility of the peer review of any original research article authored by themselves to be delegated to a member of the *CS&P* Editorial Board as appropriate.
 - If a journal editor is presented with convincing evidence that the main substance or conclusions of an article published in the journal are erroneous, then, in consultation with *CS&P* Editorial Board, the journal editor should facilitate publication of an appropriate corrigendum or erratum.
 - Editor should refrain herself (himself) (i.e. should ask a co-editor, associate editor or other member of the editorial board instead to review and consider) from considering manuscripts, in which they have conflicts of interest resulting from competitive, collaborative, or other relationships or connections with any of the authors, companies, or (possibly) institutions connected to the papers.
 - Any data or analysis presented in a submitted manuscript should not be used in a journal editor's own research except with the consent of the author. Privileged information or ideas obtained through peer review must be kept confidential and not used for personal advantage.
 - Editors should be alert to intellectual property issues and work with their publisher to handle potential breaches of intellectual property laws and conventions.
 - Journal editors should make decisions on which articles to publish based on quality and suitability for the journal and without interference from the journal owner/publisher.

FOR AUTHORS

We expect all authors submitting to *Changing Societies & Personalities* journal to adhere to the following ethical code:

- All authors must warrant that their article is their own original work, which does not infringe the intellectual property rights of any other person or entity, and cannot be construed as plagiarizing any other published work, including their own previously published work. Plagiarism takes many forms, from “passing off” another's paper as the author's own paper, to copying or paraphrasing substantial parts of another's paper (without attribution), to claiming results from research conducted by others. Plagiarism in all its forms constitutes unethical publishing behavior and is unacceptable.

-
- All authors named on the paper are equally held accountable for the content of a submitted manuscript or published paper. All persons who have made significant scientific or literary contributions to the work reported should be named as co-authors. The corresponding author must ensure all named co-authors consent to publication and to being named as a co-author. Where there are others who have participated in certain substantive aspects of the research project, they should be acknowledged or listed as contributors.
 - Authors must not submit a manuscript to more than one journal simultaneously. An author should not in general publish manuscripts describing essentially the same research in more than one journal of primary publication. Authors should not submit previously published work, nor work, which is based in substance on previously published work, either in part or whole.
 - Authors must appropriately cite all relevant publications. The authors should ensure that they have written entirely original works, and if the authors have used.
 - The work and/or words of others, this has been appropriately cited or quoted. Information obtained privately, as in conversation, correspondence, or discussion with third parties, should not be used or reported in the author's work unless fully cited, and with the permission of that third party.
 - If required, authors must facilitate access to data sets described in the article. a paper should contain sufficient detail and references to permit others to replicate the work.
 - Authors must declare any potential conflict of interest—be it professional or financial—which could be held to arise with respect to the article. All authors should disclose in their manuscript any financial or other substantive conflict of interest that might be construed to influence the results or interpretation of their manuscript.
 - Authors must avoid making defamatory statements in submitted articles, which could be construed as impugning any person's reputation.

FOR PEER REVIEWERS

We ask all peer reviewers to make every reasonable effort to adhere to the following ethical code for *Changing Societies & Personalities* journal articles they have agreed to review:

- Reviewers must give unbiased consideration to each manuscript submitted for consideration for publication, and should judge each on its merits, without regard to race, religion, nationality, sex, seniority, or institutional affiliation of the author(s).
- Reviewers should declare any potential conflict of interest interests (which may, for example, be personal, financial, intellectual, professional, political or

religious) prior to agreeing to review a manuscript including any relationship with the author that may potentially bias their review.

- Reviewers must keep the peer review process confidential; information or correspondence about a manuscript should not be shared with anyone outside of the peer review process.
- Reviewers should provide a constructive, comprehensive, evidenced, and appropriately substantial peer review report, and provide feedback that will help the authors to improve their manuscript. Reviewers should express their views clearly with supporting arguments and make clear, which suggested additional investigations are essential to support claims made in the manuscript under consideration, and which will just strengthen or extend the work. Reviewers must ensure that their comments and recommendations for the editor are consistent with their report for the authors.
- Reviewers must be objective in their reviews, refraining from being hostile or inflammatory. Reviewers must avoid making statements in their report, which might be construed as impugning any person's reputation. Personal criticism of the author is inappropriate.
- Reviewers must be aware of the sensitivities surrounding language issues that are due to the authors writing in a language that is not their own, and phrase the feedback appropriately and with due respect.
- Reviewer must not suggest that authors include citations to the reviewer's (or their associates') work merely to increase the reviewer's (or their associates') citation count or to enhance the visibility of their or their associates' work; suggestions must be based on valid academic or technological reasons.
- Any selected reviewer who feels unqualified to review the research reported in a manuscript should notify the editor and excuse himself from the review process.
- Reviewers should make all reasonable effort to submit their report and recommendation in a timely manner, informing the editor if this is not possible.
- Reviewers should identify relevant published work that has not been cited by the authors. Any statement that an observation, derivation, or argument had been previously reported should be accompanied by the relevant citation. Reviewers should call to the journal editor's attention any significant similarity between the manuscript under consideration and any published paper or submitted manuscripts, of which they are aware.
- Unpublished materials disclosed in a submitted manuscript must not be used in a reviewer's own research without the express written consent of the author. Privileged information or ideas obtained through peer review must be kept confidential and not used for personal advantage.



INSTRUCTION FOR AUTHORS

Manuscript preparation	289
1. General guidelines.....	289
Description of the journal's article style.....	289
2. Style guidelines	290
Description of the journal's reference style	291
3. Figures.....	298

Thank you for choosing to submit your paper to us. These instructions will ensure we have everything required so your paper can move through peer review, production, and publication smoothly. Please take the time to read and follow them as closely as possible, as doing so will ensure your paper matches the journal's requirements.

Use these instructions if you are preparing a manuscript to submit to *Changing Societies & Personalities*. To explore our journal portfolio, visit <https://changing-sp.com>

Changing Societies & Personalities considers all manuscripts on the strict condition that:

- (a) the manuscript is your own original work, and does not duplicate any other previously published work, including your own previously published work;
- (b) the manuscript has been submitted only to *Changing Societies & Personalities*; it is not under consideration or peer review or accepted for publication or in press, or published elsewhere;
- (c) the manuscript contains nothing that is abusive, defamatory, libelous, obscene, fraudulent, or illegal;
- (d) the manuscript is presented in grammatically correct, stylistically appropriate and readable English.

By submitting your manuscript to *Changing Societies & Personalities* you are agreeing to any necessary originality checks your manuscript may have to undergo during the peer-review and production processes.

Manuscript preparation

1. General Guidelines

Description of the Journal's Article Style

All authors must submit articles written in good English using correct grammar, punctuation and vocabulary. If authors are non-native English speakers or writers, may, if possible, to have their submissions proofread by a native English speaker before submitting their article for consideration.

A typical manuscript is from 6000 to 8000 words including tables, references, captions, footnotes and endnotes. Review articles should not exceed 4000 words, and book reviews should not exceed 1500 words. Manuscripts that greatly exceed this will be critically reviewed with respect to length.

Manuscripts should be compiled in the following order: title page (including Acknowledgements as well as Funding and grant-awarding bodies); abstract; keywords; main text; acknowledgments; references; appendices (as appropriate); table(s) with caption(s) (on individual pages); figure caption(s) (as a list).

Abstracts of 150–200 words are required for all manuscripts submitted.

Each manuscript should have 5 to 10 keywords.

Section headings should be concise.

All authors of a manuscript should include their full names, affiliations, postal addresses, telephone numbers and email addresses on the cover page of the manuscript. One author should be identified as the corresponding author. Please give the affiliation where the research was conducted. If any of the named co-authors moves affiliation during the peer review process, the new affiliation can be given as a footnote. Please note that no changes to affiliation can be made after the manuscript is accepted. Please note that the email address of the corresponding author will normally be displayed in the published article and the online version.

All persons who have a reasonable claim to authorship must be named in the manuscript as co-authors; the corresponding author must be authorized by all co-authors to act as an agent on their behalf in all matters pertaining to publication of the manuscript, and the order of names should be agreed by all authors.

Please supply a short biographical note for each author.

Please supply all details required by any funding and grant-awarding bodies as an Acknowledgement on the title page of the manuscript, in a separate paragraph, as follows:

For single agency grants: "This work was supported by the [Funding Agency] under Grant [number xxxx]."

For multiple agency grants: "This work was supported by the [Funding Agency 1] under Grant [number xxxx]; [Funding Agency 2] under Grant [number xxxx]; and [Funding Agency 3] under Grant [number xxxx]."

For all manuscripts non-discriminatory language is mandatory. Sexist or racist terms must not be used. The singular “they” or “their” is endorsed as a gender-neutral pronoun. Instead of using adjectives as nouns to label groups of people, descriptive phrases are preferred. Instead of broad categories, using exact age ranges that are more relevant and specific is preferable.

2. Style Guidelines

- Font:* Helvetica, “Helvetica Neue” or Calibri, Sans-Serif, 12 point. Use margins of at least 2.5 cm (1 inch).
- Title:* Use bold for your article title, with an initial capital letter for any proper nouns.
- Authors’ names:* Give the names of all contributing authors on the title page exactly as you wish them to appear in the published article.
- Affiliations:* List the affiliation of each author (university, city, country).
- Correspondence details:* Please provide an institutional email address for the corresponding author. Full postal details are also needed by the publisher, but will not necessarily be published.
- Anonymity for peer review:* Ensure your identity and that of your co-authors is not revealed in the text of your article or in your manuscript files when submitting the manuscript for review.
- Abstract:* Indicate the abstract paragraph with a heading or by reducing the font size.
- Keywords:* Please provide five to ten keywords to help readers find your article.
- Headings:* Please indicate the level of the section headings in your article:
- First-level headings (e.g., Introduction, Conclusion) should be in bold, with an initial capital letter for any proper nouns.
 - Second-level headings should be in bold italics, with an initial capital letter for any proper nouns.
 - Third-level headings should be in italics, with an initial capital letter for any proper nouns.
 - Fourth-level headings should also be in italics, at the beginning of a paragraph. The text follows immediately after a full stop (full point) or other punctuation mark.
- Tables and figures:* Indicate in the text where the tables and figures should appear, for example by inserting [Table 1 near here]. The actual tables and figures should be supplied either at the end of the text or in a separate file as requested by the Editor.

If your article is accepted for publication, it will be copy-edited and typeset in the correct style for the journal.

Foreign words and all titles of books or plays appearing within the text should be italicized. Non-Anglophone or transliterated words should also appear with translations provided in square brackets the first time they appear (e.g., weltanschauung [world-view]).

If an English translation of a foreign work is referenced, the author, title, and so forth come from the version read, with a nod to the translator: Piaget, J. (1969). *The psychology of the child* (H. Weaver, Trans.). Basic Books.

If acronyms are employed (e.g., the BUF), the full name should also be given the first time they appear.

Please use double quotation marks, except where “a quotation is ‘within’ a quotation”. Long quotations of words or more should be indented with quotation marks.

To draw more attention to the items and help readers understand the separate, parallel items in a complex list, use lowercase letters in parentheses before each item. Do not use numbers in parentheses.

If you have any queries, please contact us at <https://changing-sp.com/ojs/index.php/csp/about/contact>

Description of the Journal's Reference Style

**CHANGING SOCIETIES & PERSONALITIES
STANDARD REFERENCE STYLE: *APA***

APA (*American Psychological Association*) references are widely used in the social sciences, education, engineering and business. For detailed information, please see the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 7th edition, <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines> and <https://apastyle.apa.org/blog>

In the text:	
Placement	References are cited in the text by the author's surname, the publication date of the work cited, and a page number if necessary. Full details are given in the reference list. Place them at the appropriate point in the text. If they appear within parenthetical material, put the year within commas: (see Table 3 of National Institute of Mental Health, 2012, for more details)
Within the same parentheses	Order alphabetically and then by year for repeated authors, with in-press citations last. Separate references by different authors with a semi-colon.
Repeat mentions in the same paragraph	If name and year are in parentheses, include the year in subsequent citations.

With a quotation	This is the text, and Smith (2012) says "quoted text" (p. 1), which supports my argument. This is the text, and this is supported by "quoted text" (Smith, 2012, p. 1). This is a displayed quotation. (Smith, 2012, p. 1)
Page number	(Smith, 2012, p. 6)
One author	Smith (2012) or (Smith, 2012)
Two authors	Smith and Jones (2012) or (Smith & Jones, 2012)
Three or more authors	Three or more authors is shortened right from the first citation: Smith et al. (2012) or (Smith et al., 2012).
Authors with same surname	G. Smith (2012) and F. Smith (2008) G. Smith (2012) and F. Smith (2012)
No author	Cite first few words of title (in quotation marks or italics depending on journal style for that type of work), plus the year: (Study Finds, 2007).
Not published yet	Do not provide a year in the reference if the document is not published yet. If the document is about to be published, use "in press": Smith (in press)
Groups of authors that would shorten to the same form	Cite the surnames of the first author and as many others as necessary to distinguish the two references, followed by comma and et al.
Organization as author	When a document doesn't list a specific author, list the organization in the author position. The name of an organization can be spelled out each time it appears in the text or you can spell it out only the first time and abbreviate it after that. The guiding rule is that the reader should be able to find it in the reference list easily. National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH, 2012) or (National Institute of Mental Health [NIMH], 2012) University of Oxford (2012) or (University of Oxford, 2012)
Author with two works in the same year	Put a, b, c after the year (Chen, 2011a, 2011b, in press-a)
Secondary source	When it is not possible to see an original document, cite the source of your information on it; do not cite the original assuming that the secondary source is correct. Smith's diary (as cited in Khan, 2012)
Classical work	References to classical works such as the Bible and the Qur'an are cited only in the text. Reference list entry is not required. Cite year of translation (Aristotle, trans. 1931) or the version you read: Bible (King James Version).
Personal communication	References to personal communications are cited only in the text: A. Colleague (personal communication, April 12, 2011)
Unknown date	(Author, n.d.)
Two dates	(Author, 1959–1963) Author (1890/1983)
Self-translated passage	If you translated a passage from one language into another it is considered a paraphrase, not a direct quotation. Thus, to cite your translated material, all you need to do is include the author and date of the material in the in-text citation. It is recommended (but not required) that you also include the page number in the citation, because this will help any readers to find the translated passage in the original. You should not use quotation marks around the material you translated (alternative: to use the words "my translation" after the passage in square brackets).
Notes	Endnotes should be kept to a minimum. Any references cited in notes should be included in the reference list.

Tables and figures	Put reference in the footnote or legend
Reference list	
Order	<p>Your reference list should appear at the end of your paper. It provides the information necessary for a reader to locate and retrieve any source you cite in the body of the paper. Each source you cite in the paper must appear in your reference list; likewise, each entry in the reference list must be cited in your text.</p> <p>Alphabetical letter by letter, by surname of first author followed by initials. References by the same single author are ordered by date, from oldest to most recent. References by more than one author with the same first author are ordered after all references by the first author alone, by surname of second author, or if they are the same, the third author, and so on. References by the same author with the same date are arranged alphabetically by title excluding 'A' or 'The', unless they are parts of a series, in which case order them by part number. Put a lower-case letter after the year:</p> <p>Smith, J. (2012a). Smith, J. (2012b).</p> <p>For organizations or groups, alphabetize by the first significant word of their name.</p> <p>If there is no author, put the title in the author position and alphabetize by the first significant word.</p>
Form of author name	<p>Use the authors' surnames and initials unless you have two authors with the same surname and initial, in which case the full name can be given:</p> <p>Smith, J. [Jane]. (2012). Smith, J. [Joel]. (2012).</p> <p>If a first name includes a hyphen, add a full stop (period) after each letter: Jones, J.-P.</p>
Book	
One author	Author, A. A. (2012). <i>This is a book title: And subtitle</i> . Abingdon: Routledge (place of publication is optional).
Two authors	Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (2012). <i>This is a book title: And subtitle</i> . Abingdon: Routledge (place of publication is optional).
Three authors	Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. (2012). <i>This is a book title: And subtitle</i> . Abingdon: Routledge (place of publication is optional).
More authors	Include all names up to twenty. If there are more than twenty authors, list the first nineteen authors, followed by an ellipsis and the last author's name.
Organization as author	American Psychological Association. (2003). <i>Book title: And subtitle</i> . Abingdon: Routledge (place of publication is optional).
No author	<i>Merriam Webster's collegiate dictionary</i> (10 th ed.). (1993). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster (place of publication is optional).
Chapter	<p>Author, A. A. (2012). This is a chapter. In J. J. Editor (Ed.), <i>Book title: And subtitle</i> (pp. 300–316). Abingdon: Routledge (place of publication is optional).</p> <p>Author, A. A. (2012). This is a chapter. In J. J. Editor & B. B. Editor (Eds.), <i>Book title: And subtitle</i> (pp. 300–316). Abingdon: Routledge (place of publication is optional).</p> <p>Author, A. A. (2012). This is a chapter. In J. J. Editor, P. P. Editor, & B. B. Editor (Eds.), <i>Book title: And subtitle</i> (pp. 300–316). Abingdon: Routledge (place of publication is optional).</p>

Edited	<p>Editor, J. J. (Ed.). (2012). <i>Book title: And subtitle</i>. Abingdon: Routledge (place of publication is optional).</p> <p>Editor, J. J., Editor, A. A., & Editor, P. P. (Eds.). (2012). <i>Book title: And subtitle</i>. Abingdon: Routledge (place of publication is optional).</p> <p>Editor, J. J., & Editor, P. P. (Eds.). (2012). <i>Edited online book: And subtitle</i>. (The website name). https://www.w3.org</p>
Edition	Author, A. A. (2012). <i>Book title: And subtitle</i> (4 th ed.). Abingdon: Routledge (place of publication is optional).
Translated	Author, J. J. (2012). <i>Book title: And subtitle</i> . (L. Khan, Trans.). Abingdon: Routledge (place of publication is optional).
Not in English	<p>Doutre, É. (2014). <i>Mixité de genre et de métiers: Conséquences identitaires et relations de travail</i> [Mixture of gender and trades: Consequences for identity and working relationships]. Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science/Revue canadienne des sciences du comportement, 46, 327–336. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0036218</p> <p>For transliteration of Cyrillic letters please use the links: ALA-LC Romanization Tables at the web-site of The Library of Congress http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpsol/roman.html</p>
Online	Author, A. A. (2012). <i>Title of work: Subtitle</i> [Adobe Digital Editions version]. (The website name) https://www.w3.org
Place of publication (optional)	<p>Always list the city, and include the two-letter state abbreviation for US publishers. There is no need to include the country name:</p> <p>New York, NY: McGraw-Hill</p> <p>Washington, DC: Author</p> <p>Newbury Park, CA: Sage</p> <p>Pretoria: Unisa</p> <p>Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press</p> <p>Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press</p> <p>Abingdon: Routledge</p> <p>If the publisher is a university and the name of the state is included in the name of the university, do not repeat the state in the publisher location:</p> <p>Santa Cruz: University of California Press</p> <p>Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press</p>
Publisher	Give the name in as brief a form as possible. Omit terms such as “Publishers”, “Co.”, “Inc.”, but retain the words “Books” and “Press”. If two or more publishers are given, give the location listed first or the location of the publisher’s home office. When the author and publisher are identical, use the word Author as the name of the publisher.
E-book	
	<p>A citation of an e-book (i.e., a book accessed on an e-reader) or a book viewed online (e.g., on Google Books or in PDF form) includes the DOI where available. If there is no DOI, link to the page where the book is viewed, or where the e-book can be purchased or accessed.</p> <p>Since e-books sometimes do not include page numbers, APA recommends using other methods of identifying a specific passage in in-text citations—for example, a chapter or section title, or a paragraph number.</p> <p>Author, A. A. (2009). <i>Book title: And subtitle</i>. Abingdon: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.1007/xxxxxxxxxxxxxx</p>

Multivolume works	
Multiple volumes from a multivolume work	Levison, D., & Ember, M. (Eds.). (1996). <i>Encyclopedia of cultural anthropology</i> (Vols. 1–4). New York, NY: Henry Holt (place of publication is optional). Use Vol. for a single volume and Vols. for multiple volumes. In text, use (Levison & Ember, 1996).
A single volume from a multivolume work	Nash, M. (1993). Malay. In P. Hockings (Ed.), <i>Encyclopedia of world cultures</i> (Vol. 5, pp. 174–176). New York, NY: G.K. Hall (place of publication is optional). In text, use (Nash, 1993).
Journal	
One author	Author, A. A. (2011). Title of the article. <i>Title of the Journal</i> , 22(2), 123–231. https://doi.org/10.1080/xxxxxxxxxxxxxx Volume numbers in references should be italicized, but do not italicize the issue number, the parentheses, or the comma after the issue number. If there is no DOI and the reference was retrieved from an online database, give the database name and accession number or the database URL (no retrieval date is needed): Author, A. A. (2011). Title of the article. <i>Title of Journal</i> , 22(2), 123–231. (The website name) https://www.w3.org
Two authors	Benjamin, L. T., Jr., & VandenBos, G. R. (2006). The window on psychology's literature: A history of psychological abstracts. <i>American Psychologist</i> , 61(9), 941–954. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.61.9.941
Three authors	Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. (1987). Title of the article. <i>Title of the Journal</i> , 22, 123–231. https://doi.org/xx.xxxxxxxxxx
More authors	Include all names up to twenty. If there are more than twenty authors, list the first nineteen authors, followed by an ellipsis and the last author's name.
Organization as author	American Psychological Association. (2003). Title of the article: Subtitle of the article. <i>Title of the Journal</i> , 22(1), 12–23. https://doi.org/xx.xxxxxxxxxx
No author	Editorial: Title of editorial. [Editorial]. (2012). <i>Title of the Journal</i> , 14, 1–2.
Not in English	If the original version is used as the source, cite the original version. Use diacritical marks and capital letters for the original language if needed. If the English translation is used as the source, cite the English translation. Give the English title without brackets. Titles not in English must be translated into English and put in square brackets. Author, M. (2000). Title in German: Subtitle of the article [Title in English: c article]. <i>Journal in German</i> , 21, 208–217. https://doi.org/xx.xxxxxxxxxx Author, P. (2000). Title in French [Title in English]. <i>Journal in French</i> , 21, 208–217. https://doi.org/xx.xxxxxxxxxx For transliteration of Cyrillic letters please use the links: ALA-LC Romanization Tables at the web-site of The Library of Congress http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpsol/roman.html
Peer-reviewed article published online ahead of the issue	Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (2012). Title of the article. <i>Title of the Journal</i> . Advance online publication. https://doi.org/xx.xxxxxxxxxx If you can update the reference before publication, do so.
Supplemental material	If you are citing supplemental material, which is only available online, include a description of the contents in brackets following the title. [Audio podcast] [Letter to the editor]

Other article types	Editorial: Title of editorial. [Editorial]. (2012). <i>Title of the Journal</i> , 14, 1–2. Author, A. A. (2010). Title of review. [Review of the book Title of the book, by B. Book Author]. <i>Title of the Journal</i> , 22(1), 123–231. https://doi.org/xx.xxxxxxxx
Article in journal supplement	Author, A. A. (2004). Title of the article. <i>Title of the Journal</i> , 42(Suppl. 2), p–pp. https://doi.org/xx.xxxxxxxx
Conference	
Proceedings	To cite published proceedings from a book, use book format or chapter format. To cite regularly published proceedings, use journal format.
Paper	Presenter, A. A. (2012, February). Title of the paper. <i>Paper presented at the meeting of Organization Name</i> , Location.
Poster	Presenter, A. A. (2012, February). Title of the poster. <i>Poster session presented at the meeting of Organization Name</i> , Location
Thesis	Author, A. A. (2012). <i>Title of thesis</i> (Unpublished doctoral dissertation or master's thesis). Name of the Institution, Location.
Unpublished work	
Manuscript	Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. (2008). <i>Title of the manuscript</i> . Unpublished manuscript. Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. (2012). <i>Title of the manuscript</i> . Manuscript submitted for publication.
Forthcoming article	Do not provide a year in the reference if the document is not published yet. If the document is about to be published, use "in press": Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. (in press). Title of the article. <i>Title of the Journal</i> . https://doi.org/xx.xxxxxxxx
Forthcoming book	Author, A. A. (in press). <i>Book title: Subtitle</i> .
Internet	
Website	When citing an entire website, it is sufficient just to give the address of the site in the text. <i>The BBC</i> (https://www.bbc.co.uk).
Web page	If the format is out of the ordinary (e.g., lecture notes), add a description in brackets. Author, A. (2011). Title of document [Format description]. (The website name) https://URL
Newspaper or magazine	Author, A. (2012, January 12). Title of the article. <i>The Sunday Times</i> , p. 1. Author, A. (2012, January 12). Title of the article. <i>The Sunday Times</i> . http://www.sundaytimes.com/xxxx.html Title of the article. (2012, January 12). <i>The Sunday Times</i> . http://www.sundaytimes.com/xxxx.html
Reports	
May or may not be peer-reviewed; may or may not be published. Format as a book reference	Author, A. A. (2012). <i>Title of work</i> (Report No. 123). Location: Publisher. Author, A. A. (2012). <i>Title of work</i> (Report No. 123). (The website name) https://www.w3.org

Working paper	Author, A. A. (2012). <i>Title of work</i> (Working Paper No. 123). Location: Publisher. Author, A. A. (2012). <i>Title of work</i> (Working Paper No. 123). (The website name) https://www.w3.org
Discussion paper	Author, A. A. (2012). <i>Title of work</i> (Discussion Paper No. 123). Location: Publisher. Author, A. A. (2012). <i>Title of work</i> (Discussion Paper No. 123). (The website name) https://www.w3.org
Personal communication	Personal communication includes letters, emails, memos, messages from discussion groups and electronic bulletin boards, personal interviews. Cite these only in the text. Include references for archived material only.
Other reference types	
Patent	Cho, S. T. (2005). U.S. Patent No. 6,980,855. Washington, DC: U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.
Map	London Mapping Co. (Cartographer). (1960). Street map. [Map]. (<i>The website name</i>) https://www.londonmapping.co.uk/maps/xxxxx
Act	<i>Mental Health Systems Act</i> , 41 U.S.C. § 9403 (1988).
Audio and visual media	Taupin, B. (1975). Someone saved my life tonight [Recorded by Elton John]. On Captain fantastic and the brown dirt cowboy [CD]. London: Big Pig Music Limited (place of publication is optional). Author, A. (Producer). (2009, December 2). <i>Title of podcast</i> [Audio podcast]. (The website name) https://www.w3.org Producer, P. P. (Producer), & Director, D. D. (Director). (Date of publication). <i>Title of motion picture</i> [Motion picture]. Country of origin: Studio or distributor. Smith, A. (Writer), & Miller, R. (Director). (1989). Title of episode [Television series episode]. In A. Green (Executive Producer), Series. New York, NY: WNET. Miller, R. (Producer). (1989). The mind [Television series]. New York, NY: WNET.
Database	Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, A. A. (2002). A study of enjoyment of peas. <i>Title of the Journal</i> , 8(3). Retrieved February 20, 2003, from the PsycARTICLES database.
Dataset	Author. (2011). <i>National Statistics Office monthly means and other derived variables</i> [Data set]. Retrieved March 6, 2011, (<i>The website name</i>) https://www.w3.org If the dataset is updated regularly, use the year of retrieval in the reference, and using the retrieval date is also recommended.
Computer program	Rightsholder, A. A. (2010). <i>Title of program</i> (Version number) [Description of form]. Location: Name of producer. Name of software (Version Number) [Computer software]. Location: Publisher. If the program can be downloaded or ordered from a website, give this information in place of the publication information.

Social media	
Facebook ¹ citation (post)	News From Science. (2019, June 21). <i>Are you a fan of astronomy? Enjoy reading about what scientists have discovered in our solar system—and beyond?</i> This [Image attached] [Status update]. Facebook. https://www.facebook.com/ScienceNOW/photos/a.117532185107/10156268057260108/?type=3&theater Parenthetical citation: (News from Science, 2019) Narrative citation: News from Science (2019)
Facebook citation (page)	Community of Multiculturalism. (n.d.). <i>Home</i> [Facebook page]. Facebook. Retrieved October 14, 2020, from https://www.facebook.com/communityofmulticulturalism/ Parenthetical citation: (Community of Multiculturalism, n.d.) Narrative citation: Community of Multiculturalism (n.d.)

Recommendation how to cite government documents:
<https://guides.himmelfarb.gwu.edu/APA/book-government-publication>
For more examples see:
<https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/references/examples>

3. Figures

Please provide the highest quality figure format possible. Please be sure that all imported scanned material is scanned at the appropriate resolution: 1200 dpi for line art, 600 dpi for grayscale and 300 dpi for color.

Figures must be saved separate to text. Please do not embed figures in the manuscript file.

Files should be saved as one of the following formats: TIFF (tagged image file format), PNG (portable network graphics) or JPEG (also JPG).

Each file should be no larger than 1 megabyte, the total size of all files attached to one article should not be more than 20 megabytes.

All figures must be numbered in the order in which they appear in the manuscript (e.g., Figure 1, Figure 2). In multi-part figures, each part should be labelled (e.g., Figure 1(a), Figure 1(b)).

Figure captions must be saved separately, as part of the file containing the complete text of the manuscript, and numbered correspondingly.

The filename for a graphic should be descriptive of the graphic, e.g., Figure1, Figure2a.

¹ Facebook™ is a trademark of Facebook Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. По решению Роскомнадзора, социальная сеть Facebook в России признана экстремистской организацией и заблокирована.

ISSN онлайн-версии: 2587-8964
ISSN печатной версии: 2587-6104

Изменяющиеся общества и личности

2025. Том 9, № 1

Печатается ежеквартально

Основан в 2016 г.

Учредитель и издатель:

Федеральное государственное автономное образовательное
учреждение высшего образования
«Уральский федеральный университет
имени первого Президента России Б. Н. Ельцина» (УрФУ)

Адрес:

Россия, Екатеринбург, 620002, ул. Мира, 19

Главный редактор:

Елена Алексеевна Степанова

Адрес редакции:

Россия, Екатеринбург, 620000, пр. Ленина, 51, к. 240.

Телефон: +7 (343) 389-9412

Электронная почта: editor@changing-sp.com

Сайт: <https://changing-sp.com>

Журнал зарегистрирован Федеральной службой по надзору в сфере
связи, информационных технологий и массовых коммуникаций,
Свидетельство о регистрации: ПИ № ФС77-65509 от 4 мая 2016 г.

Научное издание

Changing Societies & Personalities

Vol. 9, No. 1, 2025

Дизайн А. Борбунов
Технический редактор Н. Мезина
Компьютерная верстка А. Матвеев

Дата выхода в свет 22.04.2025.
Формат 70 × 100 100/16. Бумага офсетная.
Гарнитура Helvetica.
Уч.-изд. л. 21,5. Тираж 300 экз. Заказ № 77.

Publisher – Ural Federal University
Publishing Centre
4, Turgenev St., 620000 Yekaterinburg, Russia
Phone: +7 343 350 56 64, +7 343 350 90 13
Fax: +7 343 358 93 06
E-mail: press-urfu@mail.ru

Издательство Уральского университета
620000, г. Екатеринбург, ул. Тургенева, 4

Отпечатано в Издательско-полиграфическом центре УрФУ.
620000, г. Екатеринбург, ул. Тургенева, 4
Тел.: +7 (343) 389-94-76, 350-90-13
Факс: +7 (343) 358-93-06
E-mail: press-urfu@mail.ru
www.print.urfu.ru

Распространяется бесплатно