

The role of the smartphone in modern immigration networks: a case study of refugees served by an NGO in Greece¹

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Abstract

In a post-truth world, the ever-increasing influence of digital technologies constitutes one of the main "catalysts" of global social and communicative changes in the modern world. The aforementioned rapidly evolving sector requires adequate and contemporary academic research, given its social consequences due to the 'extermination of space' and 'death of distance'. A population group, which is currently at the heart of major political, social and economic debates worldwide and that can be effectively influenced and linked to digital technology, is that of refugees. Given the fact that Greece, as an "external" border of the European Union, constitutes an entry point for thousands of third-country nationals on an annual basis, the purpose of this research was to study the reasons for the use of the Internet and Social Media- which is achieved mainly through the use of smartphones- by both minors and adult unregistered refugees and unaccompanied minors, who temporarily lived or visited the reception centers of the NGO Praxis, in Greece. It also sought to examine possible variations in their online behavior between the residence time in their homeland and the period of their migration movement. The survey adopting both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis resulted in the following findings. The refugee migrant population appears to resort to the use of the internet in order to, among other things, maintain contacts with close relatives or friends, gain access to informational material related to their final destination, watch news, navigate and organize their journey by utilizing Google Maps and GPS, learn the languages of European states through translation applications, avoid the boredom, that may result from the lack of proximity with loved ones. The findings, regarding both permanence and liquidity, seem to advocate for the radical and fundamental role, played by Social Media and the Internet in general, in modern immigration networks.

¹ If this paper is quoted or referenced, we ask that it be acknowledged as:

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Key Words

Smartphone, Internet, Social Media, Refugee Crisis

Introduction

For many years, international migration meant an extreme distance from the commune of origin (Faist, 2000), while migrants were described as "uprooted". In today's society of networks, the speed and intensity of information and communication flows, as achieved through new technological means, have substantially and significantly changed this situation, increasingly shaping our everyday life (Castells 1996, Wellman 2001). In particular, the modern globalized world is rich in recent technological developments, such as mobile phones, the internet and social networking tools, which devote extensive attention to global mobility, immigration and diaspora studies (Horst, 2006; Burrell & Anderson , 2008; Brinkerhoff, 2009; Thompson, 2009; Vertovec, 2009; Komito, 2011; Madianou & Miller, 2012). The latter seem to have brought new focus points and have challenged old examples and models that concern people, goods and information mobility (Green, 2002). Concretely, both on-line devices and the internet itself have facilitated the rapid deployment and adoption of social media platforms where people and communities share, co-create, discuss and modify the user-generated content" (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011, p. 241). To date, research has mainly focused on the use of new technologies by populations that are relatively easily accessible, such as young children (Donoso & Ribbens, 2010), students (Jacobsen & Forste, 2011, Margaryan, Littlejohn & Vojt , 2011), young and older adults (Hargittai & Hinnant, 2008, Correa, Hinsley, & De Zuniga, 2010). However, particular attention has not been given to the way in which digital technologies are adopted by non-standard populations (Leung, 2011). A population group, which is currently at the heart of major political, social and economic debates, and which can be materially affected and linked to digital technology, is the group of refugees. In the academic-scientific community, there is intense debate on the modulation capacity of Information and Communications Technologies in the mobility patterns of refugee populations (Brunwasser, 2015; Danielson, 2013; Dekker & Engbersen, 2014; Ensor & Samaan, 2015; Flemming, 2017; Gillespie, Ampofo, Cheesman, Faith, Iliadou, Issa, Souad & Skleparis, 2016; Harney, 2013; Komito, 2011; Lim, 2009; Wall, 2011; Wilding, 2006). This paper focuses on the use of the Internet and Social Media by recently arrived refugees in Greece. The parameters of the paper include a presentation of the literature outlining the increased participation of digital technologies in mobility patterns and the lives of displaced populations. The findings of a recent study that looked at how and why refugee population use ICTs will be presented, too.

Literature Review

In this section the topics, which will be reviewed, concern the sense of terms “refugee”, “undocumented refugee”, “unaccompanied child”, “Information and Communication Technologies” along with the issue of revolutionary formative potential of ICTs in refugee mobility patterns.

At first, according to the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention, a refugee is a person who “owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country” (UN General Assembly, 1951; 1967; UNHCR, 2010).

The term ‘undocumented migration’ refers to movement that takes place outside the regulatory norms of the sending, transit and receiving countries. More precisely, according to the destination countries’ perspective, the aforementioned notion means entry, stay or work in a state without the necessary authorization or documents required under immigration regulations. On the other hand, from the sending country’s perspective, the term describes the condition of crossing an international boundary without a valid passport or travel document or without having fulfilled the administrative requirements for leaving the country (IOM, 2004; Perruchoud, 2004, p. 34).

An unaccompanied child is a person who is under the age of eighteen years, unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier and who is separated from both parents and is not being cared for by an adult who by law or custom has responsibility to do so (UNHCR, 1997).

The Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) usually describes various machines and programs developed by people to facilitate the exchange of information between individuals and groups (Levy, 2013). The conceptual determination of ICT within the refugee grid is almost impossible to limit to the abovementioned description because, as Witteborn (2015) points out, mobile technologies can be considered as central tools of political action that create evolving forms of collective mobilization that cause concepts border exchange through information exchange, transnational grouping and learning policy. In this research study, using the aforementioned concept, reference is made mainly to two types of ICT, mobile phones and the internet. These two technologies combined in the form of smart phones, namely mobile phones that can be connected to the Internet and perform a range of other functions traditionally performed on computers.

The refugee issue resurfaces and affects the European continent more intensively after the Arab Spring and the war in the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa. The increase in refugee flows to Europe, which had already begun in 2010, started to get worrying in 2014. With the outbreak of the war in Syria in 2011, there was a

worsening of the existing problem and, by extension, the reception systems of the southeast Mediterranean were found in emergencies.

This uncontrolled migration of people, abandoning war, persecution and low quality of life, and directed towards Western Europe, is characterized by the media as a "refugee crisis" (BBC, 2016). However, the current wave of refugees is not only constituted by immigrants fleeing because of war and political persecution, but also because of economic dissatisfaction or a low level of life and poverty (Eurostat, 2015; Koelbl, Kuntz, & Mayr, 2015). Greece, as is the case for other European countries, which are the "external" borders of the European Union, constitutes a country of entry for thousands of third-country nationals on an annual basis.

The European refugee crisis is the first of its kind, which is "unfolding" within a fully digital era, and this has radically changed the way refugee exits are taking place. For many refugees, smart phones are the most valuable "property" they possess. The exemplary form of the "uprooted refugee" submits to another form, that of the "linked" refugee. The conceptual definition of this term involves the concepts of mobility and connectivity which work together in such a way as to ensure continuity in the lives of displaced populations, in relations that are consistent with the context of the country of origin, the host country or between them.

Increased participation of ICTs in mobility patterns and the lives of displaced populations (Komito, 2011; Levy, 2013; Singa, 2014) has been noted, as the multimodal nature of ICT has transformed the structures of personal social networks, allowing for a multi-directional flow of information and resources (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014) and it has also created a decentralized "social space" that exceeds temporal and spatial constraints and allows the user to have simultaneous presence in physical and virtual locations (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014; Witteborn, 2015). Moreover, it connects different spheres of mobility as physical mobility is ensured, while at the same time both communication and virtual mobility are facilitated (Hannam, Sheller and Urry, 2006; Larsen, Urry, & Axhausen, 2006, p. 49). Last but not least, it promotes the preservation of a "fictitious" proximity (Licoppe 2004; Licoppe & Smoreda 2005; Ling 2008).

Formative capacity of ICTs in the mobility patterns of refugee populations is apparent at the level of maintaining supranational interpersonal ties, keeping proximity to friends and relatives living in a different country (Flemming, 2011; Horst, 2006; Komito, 2011; Leung, Finney Lamb & Emrys, 2009; Lim, 2009; Ling, 2008; Mahler, 2001; Vertovec, 2004; Wilding, 2006), of access to information about the destination country of their trip (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014; Komito & Bates, 2011), of route mapping through mapping technologies and geographic information systems, such as Google Maps (Brunwasser, 2015; Gillespie et al, 2016) and access to translation services for the purpose of communication with the local population of areas crossing their journeys, of meeting personal needs such as finding a cheap restaurant, of understanding road signaling and other sources of

information (Gillespie et al, 2016). New technologies' potential on the refugee context is also evident at the level of informing relatives and friends about the process and the progress of their trip by activating GPS services (Worley, 2016), support from international organizations (Danielson, 2013; Wall, 2011), solving the uncertainties of everyday life (Harney, 2013), exchange of information within web groups constituted by former, current and future refugees (Charmarkeh, 2013; Ensor & Samaan, 2015)- named 'chain migration' - (MacDonald and MacDonald, 1964), access to informational material (Gillespie et al., 2016) and basic banking services (Duale, 2011; Omata, 2011), maintaining recreational habits (Leung, Finney Lamb & Emrys, 2009), opportunities for higher education through online connection with university institutes (Dankova & Giner, 2011).

Although mobile Internet access, achieved mainly through smart phones, has "revolutionarily" changed everyday life, including those who were forced to leave their countries due to armed conflicts or natural disasters (Maitland & Xu, 2015), the review of the bibliography shows that the use of new technologies by refugees has been little examined (Leung, 2011). Most of the current studies, that have already carried out with this non-typical population, cover the digital behavior of refugee communities where access and digital literacy are considered as non-problematic. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the reasons for the use of Information and Communication Technologies by refugees in the country of origin and the period of travel and to examine possible variations in their online behavior between the residence time in their homeland and the period of their migration movement.

Method

Participants

In this study, 16 refugees (six unregistered and ten unaccompanied minors) were interviewed. All the participants were men. The age ranged from 16 to 30 years and its average was 18, 8 years. As far as their educational level is concerned, 43, 75% has stated that they have attended some classes at Lyceum. Regarding the length of time they travel and they are away from their homeland, it is noted that this ranges from 1 month to 4 years. The average duration of their journey up to the present time in the Greek state is 11 months. Additionally, all research subjects, who participated in the research process and completed the questionnaire, were fifty men (26 unregistered and 24 unaccompanied minors). The average age of the participants was 19.14 years (sd= 5.01). It is noted that 80% of the subjects were up to 20 years old and 90% of them were up to 26 years old. From the analysis of research data it was found that the educational level of 90.2% of the research subjects is determined up to the secondary education, namely the integrated attendance at the Lyceum. The main countries of origin were Pakistan, Afghanistan, Algeria, Iran, Morocco and Sudan. The sample was involved in the study

optionally and anonymously. Non-probability sampling method that relies on data collection from population members, who are conveniently available to participate in study, was used (Cohen & Manion, 2013, pp. 113-114; Creswell, 2009, p. 148; Robson, 2007, p. 314).

Unregistered and unaccompanied minors

Unregistered refugees visit the Day Center, which operates daily only during the day, from 10am to 4p and where they have the opportunity to rest in a safe and warm place, take care of their personal hygiene, go to a doctor, take clothes, have individual meetings with the psychosocial staff of the program for the formulation of their needs and the exploration of the most appropriate mode of action that should be followed and, if they so wish, be referred to bodies corresponding to their demands. All services are free of charge. The unaccompanied minors are hosted at the accommodation center STEGI PLUS + with the main purpose of reuniting with their families. Among the services provided to them are cover basic living needs, psychosocial support, legal aid, nursing care, interpreting / mediation services, escort services, personal hygiene services, Greek language learning programs, training, creative employment, teaching aid, intercultural activities and adult labor market interconnection are taking place, too.

Materials

The present study was conducted according to the mixed methods of research, which combine both quantitative and qualitative methods in their methodological design so as to achieve, on the one hand, the best utilization of the advantages of each method and, on the other, better addressing the weaknesses of each one (principle of complementarity) (Isari & Pourkos, 2015, p. 65). The research "tools" used for the purpose of this research are the semi-structured interview on the qualitative approach of this research work and the questionnaire on its quantitative approach. All interviewees belong to a refugee population. Because of the trauma of fleeing, refugee communities have often developed introversion mechanisms as a means of self-protection. Therefore, issues of trust, access and related research framework are important parameters to be taken into account when a research study is conducted with refugee groups (Miller, 2004). Therefore, qualitative research methods involving personal engagement with participants, such as the semi-structured interview, support the development of trust that is needed to collect data that accurately reflects the experiences and perceptions of the particular population. In order to investigate the differentiated use of ICTs, a questionnaire was issued and translated in three languages, English, French and Persian, based on the questionnaire used in the scientific article of

Maitland, C., & Xu, Y. (2015) "A social informatic analysis of refugee mobile phone use: a case study of Za'atari Syrian Refugee Camp".

Procedure

The research for this paper was carried out from February to May 2017, both at the Drop-In Centre for Unaccompanied Minors and the Stegi Plus(+) accommodation centre for minor asylum seekers and vulnerable groups, which are located in Patras, Greece. The researchers, as volunteers of the NGO PRAKSIS, upon the approval with the supervisor of the NGO, got in touch with the participants and they informed them of the purpose of the study, while at the same time they assured them of strict adherence to scientific ethics concerning the anonymity of participants and the exclusive use of collected data for research purposes. The duration of the semi-structured interviews was approximately 20-30 minutes. 10 of the 16 interviews were conducted with the presence and assistance of a translator. After the gathering of interviewees' demographic data, open-ended questions were posed to the participants, while follow-up questions were necessary occasionally in order to gain additional insights into the participant's responses. All the interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed. Transcriptions and summaries were used as data sources for the content analysis. Following the iterative coding process, four thematic categories arised. Participants' responses to the questionnaire were initially coded, then transferred to a data file so that they can be finally processed and analyzed using the IBM SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). Prior to conducting the interviews and completing the questionnaires a pilot application was carried out for both research tools.

Results

In this part, the results will be presented according to the categories created on the basis of the coding research data.

Using the internet in the home country of the interviewees

There are several cases of participants who answered questions that were made by the interviewer to sketch their online profile during their stay in their country of origin and they answered that they did not use the internet at home at all. The non-use of the internet by participants was related both to network inaccessibility and to technical problems in the states from which the research subjects originate.

Interviewee Observation/Response: "The Internet is not available in Iran."
(15th participant)

Interviewee Observation/Response: “I was not using the internet. [...] In Pakistan, we did not have Internet. There, we did not need it.” (6th participant)

Few participants mentioned they were reluctant to use the Internet in their homeland. Initially, the use of the Internet was linked by research subjects with studies, specifically by searching for and finding information in specific cognitive areas.

Interviewee Observation/Response: “I often used the internet for my studies. In some lessons I needed information from google.” (8th participant)

Moreover, through the interviewees’ responses it became clear that refugees used the internet in their homeland for basic communication purposes.

Interviewee Observation/Response: “I was connecting to the Internet in Afghanistan. I was using Facebook and I was chatting with friends.” (1st participant)

Social needs: Communicating with family members

Experiencing a situation largely saturated by uncertainty and unpredictability, the refugee population strongly feels the need to communicate with family members during all phases of their travel. From the analysis of all the interviews, it was revealed that communication with the family is a primary reason for the use of "smart phone" by research subjects. It is also achieved quite easily through social networking means, at a lower cost than that of making a sim card phone call and having significant emotional benefits for the whole family.

Interviewee Observation/Response: “The internet is very important for everyone. If I did not have internet, it would be hard for me to communicate with my family, with my friends. I have no money to communicate via sim card. Now, thanks to Imo, WhatsApp I can easily talk face to face with my friends through a video call. [...]. If I hadn’t the internet, I would not speak to my family and they would be sad.” (13th participant)

In particular, there is a change in the emotional and psychological state of the research subjects, resulting from the ability of the latter to talk with their loved ones. Refugees share with them the concerns and the anxiety they experience, while they are in Greece about e.g. the state they wish to settle permanently. They gain psychological support from their family members.

Interviewee Observation/Response: “I can communicate with my family and this makes me happy. It makes me smile...” (6th participant)

Interviewee Observation/Response: Through my internet communication with my brother's wife, I have solved many problems. He gives me advice ... for my trip. I told her I was trapped in Greece and I want to come to Barcelona. What can i do; I am very confused and nervous, I am anxious about my future. And now I am very nervous because I am here in Greece for 15 months. [...] 20 days I made from Pakistan to arrive in Greece. From February 2016 I am still here.” (16th participant)

It is also worth noting that the "smart phone", equipped with the Internet, enables the traveling population to inform at any time and at any location where they are, their own people about their physical health, but also their security, which reassures his close relatives. The feeling of anxiety about the important others is suppressed in two ways, since the conversation concerns not only the absence of danger for the person in move but also for those who have remained in the country of origin of the research subject.

Interviewee Observation/Response: “I cannot imagine it. It would be very difficult to inform my home and tell them: "I'm fine. I'm safe. I am here. Do not worry about me. "... I sent them pictures through Imo, which is like skype ... If I did not have internet, I would be anxious for them but they would be anxious for me, too.” (16th participant)

Then, it was pointed out that communication with the loved ones is the pre-eminent online activity of the sample, as the interviewees share mainly with their family the need to receive money and to dispatch personal necessities such as clothing and footwear.

Interviewee Observation/Response: “What makes the internet important is to talk over it with my parents and solve some difficulties. For example sending me some money for me is a great deal.” (4th participant)

Organizational Needs: Information about the final destination

The supply of new technologies, especially mobile phones, since it has become the most widely used means of access by the refugees to the Internet, is also about providing useful information to the traveling population about its final destination. In other words, participants can keep track of developments and events taking place in the state that wish to settle permanently but also be thoroughly informed about issues of varying interest about it like legislative status, economy, educational opportunities etc.

Interviewee Observation/Response: “There are sites where you can find anything, get information on the economy of the country or what can you do when you get there, general information about refugees, about how to apply for asylum...” (3rd participant)

The research subjects have often stressed the importance of their conversations with their relatives or friends, implemented through social

networking tools, to obtain useful information about the state, which is the ultimate destination of their journey. Relatives or friends, already established in other states, mainly in Europe, urge refugees with whom they are in constant contact to move to the same state as those. In other words, these relatives or friends mark the central nuclei to determine the final choices of the displaced persons about the country who wish to settle. The informative content of these discussions varies and is mainly related to the outline of the situation prevailing in the desirable country of refugees.

Interviewee Observation/Response: “I still talk to my friends via Facebook, Telegram and sometimes via Viber. It is important to talk to my friends mainly in Europe. So, I know what's going on, what's going to happen ... [...] We want to go to France where it's good for refugees ... I'm talking to my friends, who are in France. I learn how it is there, what is good, what is bad.” (11th participant)

However, country selections as final destinations of refugee travel are not distinguishable from stability, given the continuous changes in transnational refugee context at border level, refugee reception policy, etc. For this reason, research subjects have indicated that the internet allows them to be informed about developments in different European countries in such a way that they are capable of leading to the best choice of country that will satisfy everyone's personal wishes.

Interviewee Observation/Response: “Thirdly, beyond the country I want to go, I am looking for information about experiences in other European countries, because it enables me to see which of them it gives me, it covers more what I want to do.” (3rd participant)

Organizational Needs: Watching and searching for news

During their travel, refugees consider it necessary to keep track of news so that they are aware of the developments related to both the refugee issue and the wider world. In order to achieve this, they use the internet and, in particular, they are informed through specific web pages or social networking pages, which are centred on publishing news of similar content. More precisely, the news, which employs the sample, have a focused orientation on political news, the conditions prevailing in their country of origin, legislative changes on refugee content.

Interviewee Observation/Response: “I use social networking tools ... for information on political issues.” (15th participant)

Interviewee Observation/Response: “I'm watching news and information about the world, what's happening anytime in the world. [...] There are some websites on the internet to read news about everyday life.” (3rd participant)

Organizational Needs: Google Maps & GPS, Guidance Tools

The "smart phone" justifies its sought-after use within the refugee population because of its benefits to head the refugees to an unknown location during their journey. Finding possible routes and locating desirable places is a common task that is often called for by refugees on the road. Orientation in the surrounding area, guidance on successful travel from Turkey to Greece, directions for finding specific stores in places that cross over during their journey are achieved through the use of Google Maps, the online web mapping service, and the Global Positioning or Positioning System, GPS.

Interviewee Observation/Response: "If I hadn't my mobile phone to connect to the internet all this year, I think a lot of things would change on my trip. It would cause me a lot of problems. For example, I would not even go into google maps to lead me to the place I wanted." (8th participant)

Organizational Needs: Language Learning- The Role of Google Translation

The analysis of the interviews led to the creation of another category, which refers to the willingness expressed by the refugee population to learn the languages of the European states. The refugee population through translation services stated that it was trying to learn and become familiar with a beginner's level with the predominant languages of European states. Concretely, the learning of European languages is closely linked with the place of temporary residence of the displaced population, the desired countries of permanent establishment, the predominant position of the English language in the modern world.

Interviewee Observation/Response: "I want to go to France ... because I have friends there. [...] I use google translator. I write in English and it translates it to French." (13th participant)

Interviewee Observation/Response: "The internet helps me to learn some English through google translator, which from Urdu gives the word in English both in written and in audio form [...] I know that in the outside world people speak a lot of English." (10th participant)

Leisure activities- Personal interests

Another need, which was found in analyzing interviews and based on the use of "smart phone", is the "diversion" of anxiety. The road to a better life, sought by refugees struggling to settle in another European country, seems to be full of many obstacles and unbelievable psychological pressure. However, almost all of the respondents said that part of the time they dedicate to online is only about their personal pleasure and their personal interests. Within the most popular online activities are watching movies,

videos of varied interest, listening to music in the YouTube social media network, photo editors, painting applications, etc. It is worth noting that the absence of the family and generally of the loved ones was highlighted by the participants as the main reason for resorting to online recreational activities.

Interviewee Observation/Response: “I listen to music, I watch movies and football matches... that I like very much ... on YouTube.” (7th participant)

Interviewee Observation/Response: “I often feel compelled to use Internet because here I haven’t my friends, my siblings, my mother or my father and I try to watch movies or play.” (2nd participant)

Use of ICT in the country of origin and the period of travel

It was found that there is a statistically significant difference for the three sub-axes of the differentiated use of ICT as the frequency of Internet use, of mobile phone’s use as a means of internet connection and of social networking tools in the traveling period had higher rates than those corresponding to the period of residence of the refugees in their homeland.

Comparative presentation	Range*	Mean	Sig
Frequency of internet use– homeland	1-6	3,80	.000***
Frequency of internet use– move		5,14	
Frequency of mobile phone use as a means of internet connection – homeland	1-6	3,86	.012**
Frequency of mobile phone use as a means of internet connection – move		5,14	
Frequency of social media use – homeland	1-6	2,20	.001***
Frequency of social media use – move		2,55	

*1= never, 2= occasionally, 3= monthly, 4= weekly, 5= once a day, 6= more than once a day

**at the level of statistical significance: 0.05

***at the level of statistical significance: 0.01

It was found that there is a relationship between the frequency of internet use at home and the educational level ($r_{\text{Pearson}} = .389$) and that this relationship is statistically significant ($p = .005$). On the other hand, there was no statistically significant relationship between the frequency of internet use during the travel and the educational level. It appears that the higher the level of education, the more the participants used the internet in their country of origin, and this is not observed while the research subjects were on move. Similarly, it was found that there is a relationship between the frequency of

use of the mobile phone as a means of connecting home and the educational level ($r_{\text{pearson}} = .392$) and that this relationship is statistically significant ($p = .004$). On the other hand, there was no statistically significant relationship between the frequency of use of the mobile phone as a means of internet connection during the movement and the educational level. It appears that the higher the level of education, the more the participants used the mobile phone as a means of connecting to the internet in their country of origin, and this is not observed during the travel of participants. Last but not least, it was found that there is a relationship between the frequency of use of social media in the home country and the educational level ($r_{\text{pearson}} = .515$) and that this relationship is statistically significant ($p = .000$). Also, a statistically significant relationship was found between the frequency of use of social media on the move and the educational level ($r_{\text{pearson}} = .320$, $p = .022$). It appears that the higher the level of education, the more the participants used social networking tools in their home country, but they continue to use them when moving.

Variable	Frequency of internet use (homeland)	Frequency of internet use– (move)
Educational level	$r_{\text{pearson}} = .389$ $p = .005^{**}$	$r_{\text{pearson}} = -.094$ $p = .513$
	Frequency of mobile phone use as a means of internet connection (homeland)	Frequency of mobile phone use as a means of internet connection – move
	$r_{\text{pearson}} = .392$ $p = .004^{**}$	$r_{\text{pearson}} = -.093$ $p = .518$
	Frequency of social media use (homeland)	Frequency of social media use (move)
	$r_{\text{pearson}} = .515$ $p = .000^{**}$	$r_{\text{pearson}} = .320$ $p = .022^*$

* at the level of statistical significance: 0.05

** at the level of statistical significance: 0.01

Conclusion

The research findings demonstrate that the Internet usage is remarkably different when research subjects move away from their home country and start their journey to a mainly European country as their Internet interests and online activities are radically changed. The internet, while the period of residence of the sample in their country of origin was by the majority in insignificant place, gains a vital role to play when participants are in move situation. Through the semi-structured interviews, the configuration capacity of the internet in the life of refugees is apparent, which turns out to a large extent through the variety of reasons why they resort to the use of the Internet after leaving home. Among the most important, communication with close family members, access to news about the refugee context, information on the final destination, translation services, maps, GPS, leisure activities are included.

All in all, the use of ICT influences "revolutionarily" the modern networks of mobility and relocation of refugee populations, as it lets them stay connected with their roots and feel "close" to their place of origin by watching home news, by being in regular and direct contact with their loved ones, by communicating with relatives in other places of the world. At the same time, it helps them to adapt to life in a new country, forge a new but uncertain future, seeking better living conditions and maintaining the stability and foundations of past life (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014; Flemming, 2011; Licoppe and Smoreda, 2005: 321; Ling, 2008; Urry, 2000). New technologies' potential appears inside the feature of social symbiosis that promotes a sense of presence among geographically dispersed individuals (Licoppe 2004; Licoppe & Smoreda 2005; Ling 2008) and a social cyberspace independent of the spatial, constraints that in turn strengthen and also "fuel" the desire of refugees to begin their journey.

On the basis of the research findings of this work, the interventionist and, at the same time, formative role of solidarity networks, as mobilized through Information and Communication Technologies, could be a future research concern on refugee movement networks, entry and reception European countries, support for travel and social integration.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the research subjects who participated in the research process were chosen according to convenient sampling, where the generalizability parameters in this type of sample are a minor issue (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2008, p. 170). Furthermore, conducting the present study with more participants or different geographic areas in future methodological planning may "illuminate" aspects of the specific research problem that can benefit the scientific community.

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