

The migrant lives of the digital generation

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Abstract

This study explores how young Korean migrants appropriate information and communication technologies (ICTs) in Canada. Drawing on qualitative interview data, the study focuses on Korean ‘digital generation’ immigrants who grew up with the rapid development of the ICT industry in Korea. By addressing the specific demographic of young migrants who have already been saturated by digital media in their pre-migration childhood, the study explores how the young people’s memories of earlier digital media use are articulated with their adoption of newer media forms during the post-migration period.

Keywords: information and communication technologies (ICTs); internet; digital generation; Korean diaspora; migrant youth.

Introduction

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have increasingly influenced the process and experience of transnational migration. Migrants utilize various forms of ICTs for multiple purposes, such as connecting with their country of origin, adapting to the destination country, and reworking their identity. ICTs have moved ‘from background to foreground’ in migrants’ lives since the introduction of low-cost ubiquitous media (Miller 2012). The tendency of media-saturated migrant lives might be evident, especially among young migrants who have grown up, and are familiar, with digital media (Nedelcu 2012). However, while young immigrants and ethnic minorities have gradually been addressed in relation to their ICT use and cultural integration with the country of destination, the scope of empirical studies has not been sufficiently diverse. Thus, numerous diasporic young people remain unexamined in media studies. In this respect, the present study examines South Korean (hereafter Korean)-born, young migrants’ appropriation of ICTs in the process of migration. It focuses on Korean ‘digital generation’ immigrants who have grown up with the rapid development of the ICT industry in their country of origin (Korea) during its neo-liberal reform after the 1997 Asian financial crisis. This specific demographic of younger migrants, who have already been largely saturated by digital media in their pre-migration childhood, may engage with media environments more than any other migrant populations. The digital generation in the study loosely refers to a ‘media generation’ who ‘are constructed as collectively produced, shared and processed responses to the availability or pervasiveness of a particular technology’ (Vittadini et al., 2014). Thus, the digital generation in this study includes young people who might share similar memories about the development of new media in their childhood, yet may be potentially heterogeneous in terms of social and cultural backgrounds.

Korea has been consistently ranked as one of the largest sources of immigrants to Canada (Kwak and Hiebert 2010). However, despite the increasing number of Korean migrants in Canada, their media practices in the process of migration and settlement have rarely been addressed. In this respect, the present study focuses on young Koreans who were already immersed in the new media environment during their pre-migration period, and it explores their memories of earlier digital media use, as well as their adoption of newer media forms (such as social media and smartphones) during the post-migration period. Rather than focusing exclusively on one type of ICT, the present study addresses ICTs as an integrated environment in which a form of technology is always redefined in relation to other technologies and users’ offline contexts (Madianou and Miller 2012). In so doing, the present study examines the role of emerging media in young migrants’ lives.

Studying Young Migrant ICT Users

Until the early 2000s, when Internet-mediated communication began to be popularly adopted by transnational migrants, the qualitative studies of migrants’ use of media focused on the reception of diasporic media content (e.g., Cottle 2000). In comparison, recent studies have explored how the lived experience of migration is interwoven with technologically mediated everyday contexts with reference to the appropriation of various ICTs (e.g., Hjorth 2007; Madianou and Miller 2012; Nedelcu 2012; Wilding 2006).

The media analyses of migrants’ use of ICTs in the country of destination have shown the significance of several influential factors: age, generation, and gender amongst others. In particular, generational difference in the era of rapidly evolving digital media has been identified as an important variable in ethnic minorities’ ICT use and identity work (Elias and

Lemish 2008). Thus, the ethnographic or ‘non-media-centric’ media studies (Moores 2012) have gradually addressed young immigrants as a demographic that shows a vivid conjunction between media technology, mobility, and identity. Diasporic young people’s use of ICTs, often in comparison to that of older, 1st generation immigrants, has attracted increasing attention in studies of migration and media. Of course, media studies of ethnic minority youth’s media practices have not suddenly emerged, as a fair amount of empirical studies on the topic have already been conducted (e.g. Barker 1997; Gillespie 1995). However, those earlier studies before the early or mid-2000s mainly examined mass media forms and thus their findings are outdated, as some aspects of media practices these days—such as high level of mobility and interactivity—were not fully addressed. In comparison, the recent ethnographic studies, some of which are combined with survey methods, have addressed how young ethnic minorities appropriate different types of media including mobile and digital media in a particular country of residence, such as Australia (Green and Kabir 2012), Belgium (Dhoest 2015), Israel (Elias and Lemish 2008), Netherlands (Leurs and Ponzanesi 2013), Sweden (Rydin and Sjöberg 2008), and Switzerland (Bonfadelli et al. 2007; Moser and Thomas 2008).

The ongoing evolution of ICTs involves complex processes of media consumption, as ICTs may increasingly play a bilateral role of ‘maintaining connections with the country of origin and the ethnic-cultural community, while also establishing connections with the country of residence and its culture’ (Dhoest 2015: 2). Indeed, the recent studies’ findings largely show ICT users ‘bonding’ with the homeland and/or ‘bridging’ with the host country (Peeters, and d’Haenens, 2005). The studies seem to agree that, while oscillating between bonding and bridging, young, 2nd generation immigrants utilize ICTs for “outward” integration with the host country’s language, culture, and social network (Elias and Lemish 2008). The generational differences in immigrants’ use of ICTs imply the significance of the ‘time variable’ in media practices, which consist of the age when an individual immigrant’s path of migration started and the length of immigrant life in the destination country (Vitadini et al., 2013; see also Green and Kabir, 2012).

The aforementioned recent studies have contributed to the literature and furthermore suggested a few important research agendas. The studies have empirically explored that different ICTs are negotiated and appropriated for diasporic connections of migrant populations and/or for their networking with the host society. In so doing, some of the studies have proposed to challenge an essentialist understanding of generation and ethnicity in the analysis of migration and media (Dhoest et al, 2012; Peeters and d’Haenens, 2005; Rydin and Sjöberg, 2008). There have been efforts to move beyond generational differences as fixed categories. For this purpose, some of the studies have examined young people not in separation from the older generation, but deployed a ‘family perspective’ that includes interviews with and/or observations of young people *and* their parents in the context of the home and household. (Rydin and Sjöberg 2008: 197). Meanwhile, there have been studies that address diversities and differences, rather than imagined homogeneity, within ethnic-cultural communities (Dhoest 2015; Dhoest et al 2012). Dhoest’s (2015) study of the media use of Dutch youth from diverse ethnic backgrounds in Belgium attempts to avoid overly prioritising ethnic-cultural roots, while putting more emphasis on ‘shared diasporic experiences’ (Dhoest, 2015: 4).

There has been a gradual increase in the number of studies about young migrants’ ICT use. However, they are still limited in terms of geographical and demographic foci; particular research subjects such as ethnic minorities in European countries appear to be more researched

and presented than others. In this respect, research foci need to be diversified for further cross-cultural comparisons (Elias, 2013). In addition, the aforementioned studies appear to focus on 2nd generation youth, rather than young migrants who left their home country at an early age. Compared to 2nd generation youth, whose attachment to the homeland is relatively imaginary and mediated, transnational youth on the move, who are referred to as the '1.5 generation', may have deeply embodied memories of the homeland. Furthermore, although the 1.5 generation's media literacy may be influenced by what they experienced in the homeland, the existing literature has not fully addressed the migrants' use of media technologies during the pre-migration period (Mattelart 2010). Given that migration is not necessarily a rupture from life in the country of origin, the temporal contexts of migrants' use of media technologies require due attention.

Methods

To explore the young migrants' use of ICTs, semi-structured interviews with young Korean migrants were conducted in Toronto and Vancouver, Canada, between February and July of 2014. The participants were recruited via online advertising and then via snowballing. The recruited individuals totalled 57 (26 in Toronto and 31 in Vancouver; 28 men and 29 women) individuals who had immigrated to Canada in their teens and who were aged between 19 and 29. The participants will be presented using pseudonyms in the article. All of the participants were Korean-born, and the period of their residency in Canada varied between four and 15 years. The respondents comprised 45 students (undergraduate or graduate), four recent graduates/job seekers, and eight young professionals (employed at a corporation or small business). The interview participants can be categorized as follows: First, the 1.5 generation migrants who immigrated to Canada in their early teens along with their parents; and second, those who remained in Canada since their entry as pre-college, study-abroad students (alone or with their mothers). Despite differences in regard to their current occupations and the duration of migration, the participants could be considered a demographic that represents a newer breed of globalization-driven migrants, which was caused by pull rather than push factors (Yoon 2012).

The two research sites, which are the two most multi-ethnic cities in Canada, have been popular destinations for Koreans migrating to Canada. In these two cities, the established Korean ethnic networks, which consist of small ethnic businesses, ethnic education agencies (*yuhagwon*), ethnic media, and other associations, have facilitated the 'chain migration' (Parrillo 2011) of ethnic Koreans, who wish to benefit from existing ethnic resources. Given their multi-ethnic populations and the relatively vibrant ethnic Korean communities, the two research sites can illustrate vividly the dynamic process in which young Koreans negotiate *difference* and *sameness* through transnational media use.

The individual interviews centred on questions about the respondents' use of media technologies in the origin and host countries during the pre- and post-migration periods. The participants were asked how they were using and had used different forms of ICTs, especially since they had begun using the Internet. This oral history method allowed them to situate their use of new digital media in the temporal and spatial dynamics of migration. The interviews, which were conducted mostly in Korean, were transcribed and analysed through different levels of coding (Mason 2002). The data were coded descriptively, and then the initial codes were structured into synchronical and diachronical dimensions. On the one hand, the interviewees' memories and experiences of earlier new media during pre-migration were

identified as a significant theme, and on the other, their offline social relations (with families, peers, and/or colleagues) appeared as another important theme. The analysis revealed migrants' media practices as a continuation (between the pre- and post-migration periods) rather than a rupture, and new media as a socially embedded technological form rather than one that moved beyond offline relations and conditions.

The Migration of ICTs

Whether by force or choice, being an immigrant changes one's everyday routines and questions various taken-for-granted assumptions (Bailey 2008). The young Korean migrants in the present study, who had been relocated to Canada during their early or mid-teens, recalled encountering emotional difficulties, such as loneliness, insecurity, and uncertainty, especially during the early phase of their post-immigration period. While the ICT was adopted as a tool to meet the migrants' communicative needs during the migration process, it also carried diverse meanings and memories that were attached to its user. Given that migration does not solely involve people on the move but also includes the relocation of ICTs accompanied by the migrants, it is not surprising that the respondents' stories of migration often included the recollection of how and what ICTs were appropriated in the process. For example, Sang Mi, a 22-year-old woman who was separated from her left-behind family members in Korea when she migrated to Vancouver as an international student at the age of 15, recalled how she realized that her laptop was an integral part of her migrant life:

At first, I didn't bring my laptop with me [from Korea]. Well, I thought I would be fine without the laptop [laughs]. I expected something fancier to be here [in Canada] ... but [there was] nothing really [laughs]. Well, so I struggled a while ... It was a kind of devastating period, and so after my first semester, I went back to Korea and brought my laptop [back to Canada].

In addition to hardware technology, such as laptop computers, the media literacies acquired during the pre-migration period tended to be carried over throughout the migration process. For example, several respondents recalled that even after migration, they kept logging into Korean online communities and playing the same online games that they had played in Korea. A certain continuity in ICT use seemed to reduce the feelings of unfamiliarity that were caused by the physical relocation of migration.

During the post-migration period, the migrants tended to develop certain strategies of appropriating ICTs. In particular, while negotiating a new media environment in Canada, the young Korean migrants adjusted themselves to the spatial and temporal differences between the country of origin and the destination country. Migration was often recalled by the respondents as a transition from a fast to a slow time zone. For the respondents, their country of origin was described as a highly wired, 'busy', and 'fast' country, while the destination was characterized by its relatively relaxed pace. For example, Song Ji, a 22-year-old woman in Toronto, compared the speed of the Internet in Canada to that in Korea: 'The Internet here is so slow. Whenever I go back to Korea, I feel like I am in paradise. (...) The Internet is kind of slow everywhere here, whether at the coffee shop or on campus'. Such perception of slow Internet by young Koreans in the host country, may not be exclusive to young Korean migrants in Canada, as some previous studies suggested similar findings; for example, young Koreans in Australia in Hjorth's (2007) study depicted the Internet infrastructure in the host country as being 'slow and frustrating' (Hjorth, 2007).

Despite its early adoption of ICTs, Canada has been behind such countries as Korea in ICT infrastructures and resources (Middlestone 2011). Over the past 15 years, Korea has far exceeded Canada in numerous ICT indicators; one of the latest comparison in 2014 revealed that average Internet upload speed in Korea (45 Mbps) was far higher than that of Canada (5.67 Mbps), which was ranked the 53rd in the world (Nowak 2014). In the present study, owing to the relatively slow Internet speed and the limited digital infrastructure in Canada, some young migrants had adjusted the pattern of their Internet use, especially in the initial phase of the post-immigration period. Na Kyung, a 22-year-old woman in Toronto, noted the following:

My time on the Internet has decreased since I came to Canada. In Korea, I was on the Internet almost all day. I use the Internet here as well, but well, here I don't use it as much as in Korea. That's partly because it's quite slow here, and the connection is often unstable. It's irritating.

The changes in Internet usage during the post-migration period were not solely influenced by the restricted technological infrastructure; the new offline context also played an important role. For example, Jun Gi, a 29-year-old man who immigrated at the age of 13 and who had been a heavy player of online games in Korea, recalled, 'I got to play online games less and less here. Here in Canada, I hung out with guys, having fun and going camping, so it's like I didn't have time for online gaming'. Consequently, for some interviewees, their increased participation in outdoor activities in school and via their involvement in extracurricular activities reduced the amount of time that they spent on the Internet in Canada.

The young migrants' use of ICTs in Canada was adjusted during the post-migration period. Due to the aforementioned factors, such as the relatively inconvenient IT infrastructure in Canada and migrants' increased outdoor/leisure time, particular media practices were relatively facilitated or limited. For example, some young people's ICT use for downloading media content or online gaming were, by and large, decreased—at least for the first few years of the post-migration period—while transnational communication with left-behind family members or friends tended to be significantly increased. Mediated interpersonal communication with separated friends and families during the first few post-migration years was increasingly integrated into the respondents' lives as they sought a sense of continuity and belonging. In addition, the popular emergence of streaming sites and social media, primarily for the first few post-migration years, allowed the respondents to enjoy the media content of Korea online without downloading it.

As the low-cost, high-speed Internet, which had been taken for granted during the pre-immigration period, was not a default media setting in Canada, the young Korean migrants had to use the Internet and other ICTs more strategically. ICTs appeared to provide the young people with a sense of continuation between their pre- and post-migration lives via transnational interpersonal communication—including social networking on the one hand and access to diasporic media content on the other—which will be addressed in the following sections.

The Interpersonal Imagining of ICTs

Technologically mediated communication has increasingly enabled migrants to be connected with the country of origin and to, thus, maintain a sense of continuity and belonging (Madianou and Miller 2012). In the present study, the young people sought to remain connected to their left-behind friends and family members via various forms of ICTs. The

particular media that had been used for transnational and interpersonal communication had been rapidly supplemented, if not replaced, by newer ones, as Sang Mi, a 22-year-old woman who immigrated at the age of 15, pointed out:

Over the past seven to eight years, there's been a really, really big change in how I phone my parent [living in Korea]. I never imagined this before. (...) From international telephone cards to Skype, and then to the Internet phone, and then smartphones became popular, and then, recently, [there's been] another shift to KakaoTalk [a Korean developed messaging app]...

Notably, the smartphone appeared to contribute to migrants' negotiation of the new spatial and temporal environment since their entry into Canada during their adolescence. When asked what would happen if his smartphone were to become lost for a few days, Yune Gu, a 27-year-old man, noted, 'Without this [pointing to his smartphone], I may not be able to do anything. I may simply be frozen. I cannot do any communication, and I cannot do any work'.

In the present study, a few communication applications (apps) appeared to be frequently used amongst the young migrants. In particular, the globally popular social networking app Facebook and the Korean-based messaging app KakaoTalk were commonly used. The two apps were supplementary to each other, but one did not seem able to replace the other completely. For some respondents, Facebooking was considered a strategic way of engaging with local peers, rather than simply maintaining their existing peer networks. For example, when asked how the Internet played a role in her settlement in Canada, Mi Do, a 22-year-old female undergraduate in Toronto, noted that Facebook was especially helpful in getting to meet new friends beyond language and cultural barriers, and learning everyday English:

I would say that, without Facebook, life would have been much tougher. When I first came here (i.e. Canada), my English wasn't fluent enough; so, I had to think a lot before speaking. On the Internet, I could copy and paste what my friend said and Google it. I could also Google what I was trying to say [before speaking on Facebook] ... Use of Facebook helped me learn how to speak English.

In comparison, the Korean based app KakaoTalk, which offers such services as instant messaging, group chats, and free calls, was frequently used especially amongst Korean ethnic peers and small groups. The app was considered more 'personal' and 'intimate', especially compared to the highly public interface of Facebook.

The young people's use and conceptualization of a particular form of ICT in relation to another can be explained by Gershon's (2012) notion of 'media ideology', whereby media users perceive and understand an individual medium. The respondents' media ideology seemed to involve not only how they synchronically choose and distinguish between emerging media forms but also how they diachronically relate an emerging media (in the post-migration period) to previous media forms (in the pre-migration period). That is, the users' memories of the earlier digital media they had used during the pre-migration period were articulated with the ways in which they defined and used the emerging media forms.

In this respect, the young people's experiences with Cyworld¹, a Korean social networking site that was launched in the early 2000s, appeared to influence how the young people appropriate a newer communication media such as Facebook. Cyworld was depicted by

most respondents as an intimate virtual room (*bang* in Korean) which was associated with their pre-migration identity. The respondents' recollection reflected the 'Cyworld phenomenon' amongst Korean youth in the early and the mid-2000s (Choi 2006). In the respondents' recollection, Cyworld was a technology that enhances a sense of belonging and sharing, although it was outdated. The respondents, most of whom had used Cyworld enthusiastically for at least a few years (in Korea and/or Canada), were no longer active Cyworld users; they had moved onto utilizing other social networking sites—Facebook in particular. In fact, the Cyworld phenomenon has ceased over the past several years due to the site's failure to respond to the rapidly changing mobile environment (Hjorth 2014). A few young people in the study still logged into Cyworld to revisit their past diaries, pictures, and peers' comments; only one respondent still actively used the site. However, despite the young people's rapid transition to Facebook and other newer social networking tools, such as Instagram, their unique user experiences with Cyworld were not replaced by those of newer social networking sites and apps, as pointed out by Na Ra, a 23-year-old woman who migrated to Canada at the age of 15:

Facebook does not have a space for keeping journals. In Cyworld, I kept diaries. I also kept [offline] diaries. [Now that I no longer use Cyworld,] I mark general information on Facebook while writing my feelings in my diary. Facebook is used mainly to post photos.

In addition, Na Ra considered Facebook a 'convenient' tool for organizing events, grouping, and sharing information, while describing Cyworld as a 'nest'. She noted that Facebook is 'too open, and so there is no privacy'. The user experiences with Cyworld were often recalled in emotional and intimate terms, as some respondents distinguished its intimate and cute icons and design from those of Facebook. 'I think Facebook is quite dry, but maybe Koreans want a variety of emotional expressions', noted Su Ji, a 24-year-old woman in Toronto. Such comments seemed to resonate with Hjorth's (2009) observation of young Koreans' use of Cyworld in a highly affective way.

The young Korean migrants' increasing engagement with Facebook did not necessarily imply that new friend networks were initiated by a new networking media. While Facebook was used by several respondents to explore new ties moving beyond ethnically bounded, and often offline-based friendship circles, most respondents' Facebook friends were largely Koreans in Canada or in Korea, rather than non-Korean Canadians. These findings suggest that, in general, social networking tools may not operate beyond the user's offline networks. This tendency resonates with the findings of a recent American survey, the results of which indicated that young ICT users tend to appropriate social media apps for communicating with peers whom they already know offline (Madden et al. 2013).

In the present study, regardless of the number of years they had lived in Canada, most young Korean migrants' offline and online social networks were highly ethnicized, as they largely comprised a substantial number of ethnic Korean friends. With the passage of time, the respondents appeared to have become increasingly aware of their ethnic identity. This awareness was evident in the narrative of the older respondents who had experienced discrimination or white privilege in their workplaces or at their universities. For example, So Na, a 25-year-old teachers' college student who immigrated to Toronto with her family at the age of 15, commented on the marginalized position of ethnic minorities in the workplace:

This may be my prejudice, but, you know, when you are looking for a job, whom you know does matter. It seems Asians and Koreans have a limit when it comes to promotion. The top of the ladder is filled by White people. All White! For example, at my school [i.e. the school where I work as a trainee], the students are mostly immigrants [or ethnic minorities], but more than half of the teachers are white. (...) People often say this country is multicultural, but its mainstream is all White.

Regardless of their English language proficiency and the number of years since their immigration, the young Korean migrants tended to engage with virtual diasporic bubbles, reflecting the ethnically and racially divided social landscape of Canada under the guise of multiculturalism (Henry and Tator 2009). Thus, the present study questions the recent claims that social networking sites may facilitate different levels of social capital and even help migrants to explore new ties (Derkker and Engbersen 2013). As interpersonal and social communication via ICTs was often carried out within ethnic networks, the role of social networking sites in building social capital appeared to be very limited.

The Diasporic Imagining of ICTs

Accessing Korean media was an important part of the young Korean migrants' everyday ICT use, as it kept them updated about their home country and helped to affirm their cultural identity. Most respondents often accessed Korean media content via various mobile media, including Korean-based portal sites and streaming video sites, often in combination with social media—YouTube and Facebook in particular. Migrants' efforts to engage in mediated communication with the country of origin have already been observed in the previous literature (e.g. Georgious 2006; Wilding 2006; Madianou and Miller 2012) and are, thus, not unique to the case of young Korean migrants. However, these previous studies focused on a sedentary and household-oriented form while not fully exploring how media literacy, experience, and memories of the pre-migration period might be involved in post-migration media practices. In the present study, it was evident for most interviewees that the diasporic media were consumed in continuation with their earlier media practices during the pre-migration period.

Notably, a Korean-based media platform sometimes played the role of a default tool for information seeking. While Google was identified by many interviewees as a popular start-up page on Internet browsers, some respondents had Korean portal sites, such as Naver.com, Nate.com, and Daum.net, as their Internet start-up pages; these were the sites with which they had been familiar during the pre-migration period. Major Korean portal sites offer a wide range of services, such as email, news updates, user-generated contents, blogs, web-based comics (also known as 'webtoons' in Korea), and Q&As. Na Mi, a 19-year-old woman, who migrated to Canada at the age of 14, recalled how frequently she had used Junior Naver, a sub-portal service for children offered by Korean portal site Naver, during her childhood: 'My first memory of using the Internet was in Grade 1. I began using the Internet, and at first, I played flash games on Junior Naver. I played them a lot ... really ... a lot'. Due to their earlier immersion in Korean portal sites, some respondents seemed to keep using these portals even after migrating to Canada. Sang Mi, a 22-year-old woman, noted, 'I have used those portal sites for a while ... well... they have become a part of my daily life. Through those sites, I figure out what's going on in the world, how others are living, and what's going on in Korea'. In a similar vein, Su Ji, the aforementioned 24-year-old woman who migrated to Canada at the age of 10, explained what it means for her to keep track of Korean news on portal sites:

For me, keeping track of Korean news is kind of the only way I can believe I am Korean. I don't feel I belong to Canada or Korea, and I am desperate to be connected to Korea by catching up with Korean news. (...) I don't feel like I understand Canadian culture 100%, because it's a mixed culture.

As Georgious (2011, 212) argues, diasporic populations' consumption of news from their country of origin reveals 'the desire to keep in touch with the mundane nature of news that can then be shared within familial, domestic, and transnational contexts'.

While most respondents frequently accessed Korean portal sites, these sites were not necessarily their sole source of Korean news and media content. As evidenced by Jun Hee, a 19-year-old female who immigrated to Canada at the age of 15, the young migrants in the study tended to omnivorously use different sites and apps:

I don't go to any particular news sites any more. On my Facebook, people link news, video clips, or pictures. When I come across any of those links, and I feel they are important matters, I go to search for them on Naver or Daum [Korean portal sites].

In addition to the frequent access to Korean-based portal sites, the increasing global spread of Korean media content, also known as the Korean Wave, via numerous streaming sites and YouTube, has allowed young Korean migrants to easily access the imaginaries of their country of origin. Watching Korean variety shows, reality TV shows, and TV dramas via streaming sites or downloads was a common pastime among most respondents. For the respondents, 'watching Korean TV is such a pleasure and a big comfort in the middle of tough migrant life' (So Na, 25 years, female). Many respondents had viewed Korean TV programmes regularly throughout their post-migration period, while several others had become interested in the Korean programmes only relatively recently, owing to the Korean Wave and the high availability of these programmes on social media. Most respondents watched at least one Korean TV programme on the Internet on a regular basis.

Some respondents noted that they were attracted to Korean shows because of familiar themes and characters, which were compared to their unfamiliar feelings about Canadian or Western media. Korean TV stars were described as more familiar figures compared to their Western counterparts. Korean pop culture might represent an alternative way to negotiate the mainstream (Western) media forms, as Han Ji, a 25-year-old woman, stated:

When I chat with Canadians (i.e. Canadian-born Canadians), they talk about some (Western) movie star and ask me 'You know him?' Then, I cannot match up. Unless I am really into them, I cannot match up Western stars' names and faces. Those are quite blurry. But I can easily recognize Kwon Sang Woo, Song Seung Hun ... [i.e. Korean movie stars].

Overall, most respondents, including those who identified themselves as bilingual, frequently accessed Korean TV and news while remaining relatively indifferent to Canadian TV. Only a few respondents watched Canadian network TV on a daily or, at most, weekly basis. It seems that, although cultural diversity is one of the main goals of the Canadian television system (CRTC 2014), ethnic minorities' interests might not be fully reflected in the national mediascape. The increasing availability of the origin country media via the Internet seemed to diminish the migrants' need to engage with Canadian mainstream media. The direct

access to the media of origin country might also reduce the role of ethnic media, which typically refers to the media that ‘are produced by ethnic communities in the host country to serve ethnics’ cultural, political, economic and everyday needs’ (Shi, 2009: 599).

As discussed in this section, the young Korean migrants extensively used Korean portal sites for information seeking, and Korean-based streaming/downloading sites for accessing Korean pop culture materials. This tendency of mediated, transnational identification with the country of origin implies that the literacy and memories of earlier media during the pre-migration period are persistently integrated with post-migrant lives.

Conclusion

This research has explored how young Korean migrants use ICTs in their migrant lives, in relation to the media experiences they had during the pre-migration period on the one hand, and in relation to the ethnically oriented context of offline networks on the other hand. The study reveals that new forms of ICTs are consumed and redefined by the way in which young migrants, who are overall well equipped with digital technologies and literacies, negotiate their migrant lives. In the study, the young migrants’ use of ICTs were largely influenced by their memories and literacies of earlier media in the country of origin and their desire to be connected with ethnic networks. For example, the young people’s familiarity with Korean-based portal sites and social networking sites during the pre-migration period appeared to affect their post-migration appropriation of newer social media forms.

While the young Korean migrants were able to omnivorously access and appropriate different new media forms, ethnically oriented boundaries in their ICT use did not seem to be diluted or disappeared. For example, despite its popular use among the respondents, Facebook did not seem to fulfil the migrant users’ desire for intimacy-based communication in ethnic networks. In addition, their social network friendships were ethnically organized to a large extent, resonating with their offline peer networks. The research findings suggest that the digital generation’s transnational migration may not significantly enhance intercultural communication in ‘multicultural Canada’. Rather, the ever-increasing ICT-mediated process of migration may result in migrants’ asymmetric transnational links with the country of origin and the host country. The young migrants’ media practices were conditioned by ethnic memories and sociality, as evidenced by their regular and direct access to Korean news and popular culture via Korean-based portals and streaming sites, as well as their ethnic use of social media. The young people in the study, who were well-equipped with technological and linguistic literacy to appreciate global new technologies, were largely dependent on ethnically preferred, or homeland-based ICTs. This pattern of ICT use amongst young migrants is not necessarily different from that of older Korean immigrants who largely rely on the homeland media, due to their linguistic and cultural barriers (e.g., Son, 2015). That is, the younger migrants in the study were engaged in the country of origin via various Korean-based communication tools and the new media’s ‘filter bubbles’ (Pariser 2012), which often overlapped with offline social networks focused on ethnic ties.

In the present study, ethnic orientation remained persistent in young migrants’ engagement with a new ICT environment in the host country, which echoes the assertion that ethnic and cultural orientations, not unlike other factors such as gender and social class, constitute important components of media consumption across various user demographics (Dhoest, 2015). The present research findings suggest further research agendas. First, given that the young ‘1.5 generation’ migrants’ use of ICTs revealed certain ethnic boundaries in

digital mediascape, which may share some continuity and similarity with that of older migrants, it may be hasty to clearly distinguish the ‘digital generation’ from other migrants groups in terms of ICTs use. That is, while acknowledging the potential importance of generational factors in the studies of media and migration, further empirical and comparative studies may be necessary. In particular, it seems important to explore difference in ICT use not only between younger and older immigrant cohorts, but also between the first and second generation immigrants even within the same age group. The time variable in migrants’ use of ICTs (Vitadini et al., 2013) is significant in shaping ethnic minorities’ ethnic orientations in ICT use, as the first and second generation immigrants may engage with different media experiences and mediated memories.

Second, as Dhoest (2015) pointed out, the recent literature has tended to frame the migrant young people as underprivileged groups in the context of the digital divide discourse. However, the present study has implied that some young people may already be highly knowledgeable about digital technologies prior to migration and thus carry and use their digital literacies as a way of negotiating the experience of mobility. Furthermore, migrants’ media literacy and culture obtained in their country of origin can increasingly be carried over to the host country. In this respect, the recent global phenomenon of Korean pop cultural flows may partly be explained by the diasporic mobility of young migrants who have brought their media literacy and memories of Korean media and popular culture (Yoon and Jin, 2016). Thus, it is necessary to address further how the digital literacy of young people who are physically on the move and adjusting themselves as migrant subjects in the host society are involved in, and are creating, new hybrid cultures and identities.

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Notes

¹ Cyworld (1999–2015), the social networking site operated by the Korean telecommunication corporation SK Communications, has been examined as a distinctive local SNS site, as it relies on unique information architecture while adopting metaphors of families and local space. For example, ‘friends’ who are networked through Cyworld are referred to as ‘ilchon’, which means a close family relationship (Choi 2006).

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