Korean Migrants' Use of the Internet in Canada

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Abstract Drawing on qualitative interviews with South Korean migrants in Canada, this study examines how full-time working migrants appropriate the Internet to maintain sociocultural connections with their homeland, their diasporic community, and the host society. The present study raises the question of how the rapid diffusion of the Internet may redefine the meanings of the Korean diaspora, and it explores how migrants engage in, or negotiate, the digital mediascape of the host society. While Korean migrants in the present study encountered no difficulty with accessing and using the Internet, it was largely appropriated in Korean language and in relation to Korean community rather than serving as a platform through which they could actively engage in the host society's mediascape. Thus, it is questionable how the ethnic use of the Internet may contribute to the co-construction between migrant and host media users.

Keywords: ethnic language Internet, ethnic media, homeland media, Korean migrants in Canada

Introduction

The Internet allows different media formats and content to converge, thereby lessening the formerly existing barriers to transnational communication, such as cost, distance, and institutional gatekeeping. Given that migrants often struggle with a lack of representation and recognition in the host country's dominant media system (Hopkins 2009), the pervasive diffusion of the Internet may signal an important milestone for migrants' media practices. Newer immigrant groups appear to be increasingly equipped with various forms of emerging media technologies; thus, in some cases, their rate of Internet use even surpasses that of the host country's majority population. Notably, a 2007 Canadian survey revealed that 78% of the immigrant cohort who landed in Canada during the last 10 years used the Internet, compared to 75% of Canadian-born people (Statistics Canada 2008). However, despite the seemingly narrowing digital divide between host and immigrant populations, there is a lack of in-depth research on how migrants use the Internet and negotiate identity in Canada, a country that is composed of a large number of immigrants. Given that foreign-born residents account for 20.6% of the country's total population (Statistics Canada 2015a), it is necessary to explore how migrants appropriate the Internet in Canada.

In this regard, drawing on qualitative interviews with South Korean (hereafter Korean) migrants in two Western Canadian cities (Vancouver and Kelowna), this study examines how these relatively recent migrants appropriate the Internet to maintain their sociocultural connections with their homeland, diasporic community, and host society. The study's focus on Korean migrants is noteworthy, as this group constitutes a relatively new and increasing immigrant community in Canada. As of 2006, 60% of Korean-born Canadian residents have landed in Canada in the past 10 years (Park 2012). Koreans' large-scale settlement in Canada is a recent phenomenon; thus, this demographic can provide a case study of media use by a new breed of migrants who are equipped with information technologies. Due to sociocultural factors, such as the language barrier and employment-related difficulties, the Korean diaspora in Canada remains highly ethnically attached (Chan and Fong 2012). Thus, similar to their counterparts in the United States (US), Koreans in Canada have not been substantially integrated into the host society's dominant culture; rather, they have pursued "adhesive adaptation," which is characterized by "a high level of ethnic attachment" and "a low level of assimilation" (Hurh and Kim 1984). They tend to struggle with finding employment in Canada's general economy and, thus, remain self-employed or employed within the ethnic economy (Chan and Fong 2012). In addition, despite an overall high level of education, compared to that of non-minority groups or any other ethnic minority groups, Koreans in Canada tend to have a higher rate of unemployment or underemployment; as of 2006, 16% of Korean workers were employed in low-skilled occupations compared to 13% of the non-minority population (Canada.ca 2013).

In this respect, Korean diasporas in Canada can be described using the "ethnic bubble" metaphor, which was originally used by Colic-Peisker (2002: 156) to address the phenomenon in which the non-English-speaking Croatian ethnic community in Australia formed "an island of the familiar world in the ocean of incomprehensible, (sub)urban, English speaking society." This ethnic bubble phenomenon, which has been observed in Asian communities across North America, is due to several factors, such as discrimination and difficult assimilation into the host society (Min 2013). The Korean ethnic bubbles are often maintained through small business networks (e.g., small grocery stores and restaurants) and church networks.[1]

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[1] The rate of self-employment is significantly high amongst Korean migrants, compared to the host populations. In addition, Korean churches have been influential in Korean migrants' social networking,

The present study raises the question of how the rapid diffusion of the Internet may be integrated into, and negotiated by, the Korean migrants' ethnic bubble in Canada. Drawing on migrants' own accounts, the study aims to explore how low-cost, transnational media may reshape the lived culture of migrants and their sense of belonging in the host society. This discussion of the role of the Internet in migrant life relates to the bigger question of the role of new media in a migration-based "settlement country" that has for decades proclaimed multiculturalism as its national policy. Canada's vision of a multiculturally integrated "mosaic" society has been questioned due to increasing sociocultural fragmentations, which often result in a lack of public participation (Taras 2015). In this respect, Korean migrants' understanding and use of the Internet during their post-migration period may provide an intriguing case for understanding how migrants engage with the alleged mosaic society in the era of transnational digital media.

Studying Ethnic Internet Use in the Migration Context

While earlier studies of migrants' use of media addressed a wide range of electronic media forms, such as satellite TV, radio, and films in transnational settings, the roles and meanings of the Internet in migrant life are still open to further empirical investigation. Over the past decade, ethnographic media studies have explored transnational migrants and their use of the Internet, by drawing on different migrant groups' experiences (e.g., Panagakos 2003, Madianou and Miller 2012, Trandafoiu 2013, Marat 2016). These studies have addressed the enhanced transnational aspect of migrants' lives by examining the diasporic Web sites, forums, or social networking sites. By and large, the studies have examined the Internet-mediated "transnational networking" amongst migrants and diasporic populations while working in the framework of "digital diaspora." Laguerre (2010) has defined a digital diaspora as an immigrant group that uses information and communication technologies to participate in virtual networks for various purposes that concern the homeland and/or the host land.

Despite the increasing application of the framework of digital diaspora, the lack of in-depth studies of migrants' negotiation of different media forms across national borders has persisted. In particular, the literature has not fully explored how different media forms produced in the migrants' homeland, diasporic community, and host country are articulated with each other and are involved in migrant life. In this respect, a few recent empirical studies are noteworthy, as they have vividly shown how migrants appropriate the ethnic language-based Internet in the host society as a means of maintaining or reimagining their ethnic culture and identity (e.g., Kama and Malka 2013; Son 2015; Yin 2015). As Hopkins (2009) has pointed out, migrants who are excluded from the mainstream of the national media in the host country may develop two complementary strategies for appropriating ethnic-language media: to engage with more comfortable media from the homeland or elsewhere and/or to create and consume the locally based ethnic media.

The transnational appropriation of the homeland media and the ethnic media may not be mutually exclusive (Hopkins 2009). The increasing introduction of low-cost Internet services, such as streaming TV sites and messaging apps, appears to affect how migrants access different media forms. In particular, owing to the nearly ubiquitous use of the Internet, migrants' have had greater access to different forms of ethnic language media, such as the homeland TV and locally produced ethnic content. In particular, the Internet has redefined the homeland media as a highly

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especially in major Korean-populated cities; as of 2008, approximately 200 Korean Christian congregations existed in the metropolitan Vancouver area alone (Baker 2008).

accessible and significant media form in migrant life. As Kama and Malka (2013) have pointed out, the Internet facilitates the "multifaceted consumption of homeland media" by which migrants negotiate their wish to return home on the one hand and reaffirm their attachment to home on the other.

Some recent empirical studies, which have shown the Internet's contribution to reworking ethnic identity, have further addressed how migrants negotiate the pressure associated with their cultural adjustment to the host society in the digital era (Kama and Malka 2013; Melkote and Liu 2000; Son 2015; Yin 2015). In an early study, Melkote and Liu (2000) found that the Internet might encourage migrants to adopt the behavioural aspects, such as the dress codes, of the host country; however, this did not necessarily diminish the cultural values that they carried from the homeland. Thus, Melkote and Liu (2000) claimed that migrants' increasing use of the ethnic-language Internet facilitates "pluralistic integration." More recent empirical studies (Kama and Malka 2013; Yin 2015) have found that the Internet is appropriated for migrants' maintenance of their native identities by conveying the "lost home" (Kama and Malka 2013) and creating new and positive meanings of ethnic identity (Yin 2015). The enhanced mobility and constant connection in digital diasporas appear to redefine ethnic identity, which used to be geographically attached to the homeland or the ethnic enclave in the host society, beyond its location (Horst 2010). Son's (2015) study of Korean migrants in the US has found that, partly due to the increasing appropriation of the Internet, younger migrants tend not to feel strongly the necessity of cultural assimilation to the host society. Thus, Son (2015) suggests that the premise of the cultural assimilation thesis should be reconsidered in the transnational and digital era of migration.

Despite the contribution of the recent observation of the migrants' use of the Internet in transnational contexts, further examinations of the articulation of migration and the Internet are required. In particular, little has been known about the role of the ethnic-language Internet in relation to the host country's mainstream and ethnic media content. In addition, the social contexts of migrants' media use may need to be examined further. While recent studies drawing on the notion of digital diaspora appear to romanticize the empowering role of the ethnic or homeland media, there has been a lack of empirical evidence regarding how the ethnic use of the Internet may be related to the social positions to which migrants are subject. That is, the literature has not sufficiently discussed how the digital diaspora and the ethnic use of the Internet are involved in migration as "co-construction" between immigrant and host populations (Fortunati et al. 2012).

Given the lacuna in the existing literature, further studies are required to explore how migrants are socially positioned in, and negotiate, the host country's media environments and how different media forms, such as the homeland media, ethnic media, and the host country's dominant media, are involved in such negotiation processes.

Research Contexts

To explore how a relatively new group of migrants use the Internet, Korean-born migrants were recruited for interviews in Vancouver and Kelowna in the province of British Columbia (Canada). The two research sites—the Korean-populated, multiethnic city of Vancouver and the white-dominated, medium-sized city of Kelowna—were selected because they represent different contexts of settlement and cultural adjustment. Vancouver is a highly multiethnic city that is especially famous for its large Asian communities. As of 2011, 27% of the metropolitan Vancouver population is Asian-born; in particular, 1.9% (n=34,370) of the Vancouver population is Korean-born (Statistics Canada 2015b). However, it is estimated that the actual number of

Koreans in Vancouver (including various Korean sojourners and people of Korean heritage) may be higher than the official figure. Thus, it is not surprising that Koreans in the metropolitan Vancouver area have formed Korean ethnic business areas, which comprise Korean-owned grocery stores, restaurants, and other service businesses. In addition, 28 Korean language media outlets reportedly exist in Vancouver alone as of 2011 (Jin and Kim 2011). In comparison, there have been no visible Korean business areas in Kelowna, which is probably due to the city's white-dominated nature (Teixeira and Lo 2012). As of 2011, Korean-born people constituted only 0.2% (n=330) of the 176,435 residents of the metropolitan Kelowna area, while whites constituted over 94% (Statistics Canada 2015c).[2]

The study focused on a newer and younger cohort of working populations, who had relatively unskilled occupations; according to the provincial work permit category, their current jobs in Canada belonged to the entry-level and semi-skilled category (BC Provincial Nominee Program 2015). Given their education and careers in Korea, the participants were mostly underemployed and hoping to obtain permanent residency, with a few exceptions who had recently acquired permanent residency after a few years of full-time employment under the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP). By focusing on the unskilled worker populations, this study excluded a wide range of other migrant groups, in particular, "lifestyle migrants," who are "relatively affluent and privileged populations in search of a better way of life" (Benson and Osbaldiston 2014: 3).[3] In comparison to middle-class lifestyle migrants, who are motivated primarily by the pursuit of a particular overseas lifestyle and/or cultural consumption-driven migration, the present study's research participants migrated to Canada mainly due to a lack of long-term job prospects in the home country, and, thus, the re-establishment of a career in Canada was a central task in their post-migration life.

The research project sought to recruit full-time working Korean men and women under the age of 45 among various types of Korean migrants, as it aimed to focus on the cohort aged between 25 and 44 who are considered a core working-age group in Canadian policy documents (Park 2012). As a result of advertising and snowballing methods, 22 subjects in Vancouver (n=13) and Kelowna (=9) were recruited. The 14 male and eight female participants were interviewed between February 2014 and July 2015. The majority of the participants (n=19) had landed in Canada with work permits granted through the PNP; Four of them were recently obtained permanent residency at the time of the interviews. The PNP aims to help Canadian employers hire foreign nationals to fill labour shortages in the fields in which Canadian residents are not available. After a period of full-time employment, temporary foreign workers under the PNP can apply for permanent residency. In some cases, the program has been used by business

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[2] Kelowna, which is known for its mild weather, orchards, and resort facilities for retirees, witnessed substantial population growth in the 1990s. One of the reasons for this growth was the migration of trans-local whites from Vancouver—a phenomenon that is also known as "white flight"—who were concerned about the large influx of Hong Kong immigrants (Hiebert 2005). Given this background, Kelowna's development and reputation as a "predominantly white city" is not unexpected (Teixeira and Lo 2012).

[3] The metropolitan Vancouver area, similar to several other metropolitan areas across North America, has witnessed an increase in the number of middle-class Korean transnational families, who can be considered a unique form of "lifestyle migrants." The transnational family is often referred to as the "wild geese family" (*kiroki gajok* in Korean), comprising children and the mother in Canada who are separated from the father (Finch and Kim 2012). In the wild geese family, the parents tend to plan to obtain permanent residency for themselves and their children, while the parents themselves do not usually aim to re-establish their careers in Canada and rely on their income source in Korea (Yoon 2014).

owners to exploit cheap labour power (Baxter 2010). In addition to the PNP workers, three participants who held Postgraduate Work Permit Program (PGWPP)[4] permits were interviewed. At the time of the interviews, the PGWPP workers, who had initially landed in Canada with student visas for technical degrees, worked full time to obtain permanent residency; they were interviewed primarily to observe variations within the working Korean migrants, as they were relatively confident in their English skills due to having studied in Canada. The work permits via the PNP or the PGWPP allow the permit holders to apply for permanent residency if certain conditions, such as completion of full-time employment for one to two years with the initial work permit, are satisfied. In particular, PNP program-based work permits are considered a common way to obtain permanent residency, especially amongst recent Korean migrants (Yoon 2014).

Among the 22 participants, 14 were employees at small Korean ethnic businesses, while eight worked at non-Korean-owned businesses. The participants arrived in Canada in their twenties or thirties, and as they arrived between 2008 and 2014, they could be defined as a relatively new immigrant cohort. Overall, the participants had a high level of education, as 19 of them had postsecondary degrees (86.4%). This rate appears to be higher than that of the average Canadian (64.1% of adults aged 25–64 in 2011) (Statistics Canada 2014).[5] This implies that while most of the interviewees arrived in Canada having the legal status of temporary foreign workers, as granted by the PNP, the Korean migrant workers may not necessarily fit the Canadian media's stereotypical representation of foreign workers as minimum-wage earners with low levels of education, who are sometimes depicted as a "cultural threat" (Bauder 2005).

In the semi-structured individual interviews, which lasted 60–90 minutes, the participants were asked to comment on how they coped with the changes that accompanied their migration and how they used the Internet, along with other media, in the adjustment process. Once their use patterns of the Internet and other media forms were identified, the participants were asked to further discuss how they thought and felt about their Internet use, such as constant access to online homeland media. As the interviews were conducted in the participants' first language (Korean), all interview excerpts in this article are the researcher's translation; in addition, the participants are presented by their pseudonyms.

Transnational and Local Use of the Ethnic Language Internet

Internet-mediated communication may provide a virtual space in which "immigrant communities, lacking economic or political power, are able to develop efficient channels for spreading information that is vital to their survival in the new society" (Khvorostianov et al. 2011: 584). In the present study, the Korean migrants used the Internet—far more than any other media technologies—primarily to access Korean broadcast media online (i.e., homeland media) and to transnationally or locally communicate with other Koreans. For the respondents, the Internet-mediated communications included various activities, such as content viewing, networking via social networking sites (SNSs) and their apps (smartphone applications), and information searching.

[4] The PGWPP offers three-year work permits to those who have completed a Canadian program of study (e.g., degree, diploma, or certificate program) lasting two years or longer.
[5] However, regardless of the length of their stay in Canada, most interviewees were not confident about their English skills; when asked to identify their English language skills between six levels—beginner, low-intermediate, intermediate, high-intermediate, excellent, and native-level fluency—more than 2/3 of the interviewees ticked one of the lowest levels (i.e., beginner or low-intermediate).

The online viewing of the homeland media was pervasive and frequent amongst the Korean migrants, and it was contrasted with their limited access to the Canadian broadcast media. The interviewees primarily used Web hard-based downloading or streaming services to access and enjoy Korean TV programs almost in real time. Some migrants in the study were even aware of the daily or weekly schedules of particular Korean TV channels. The viewing times and types of programs appeared to depend on the interviewees' work schedules and lifestyles. The respondents who were employed as PNP workers with a view to acquiring permanent residency status tended to be subject to intensive, low-wage labour and, therefore, often commented on their lack of leisure time. However, by and large, for the respondents, transnational access to the homeland media via the Internet was a routine aspect of their daily lives. For example, Bong Hwan, a Vancouver-based single man in his mid-twenties who landed in Canada five years ago, commented on how and when he accessed Korean TV news via Internet streaming sites, especially during his early days in Canada:

> Whenever I was nostalgic about Korea, I watched the MBC (Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation) *News Desk* [a representative Korean evening news program]. Back in Korea, the TV was always on at my house. I remember overhearing TV news. So, when (Korean) TV is on, even here in Canada, I feel like I am in Korea and, thus, feel comforted.

While access to Korean homeland media was pervasive amongst most interviewees, its frequency tended to be particularly high amongst those who self-identified as beginner or low-to-intermediate English speakers. The immigrants' frequent access to homeland media via the Internet is not surprising, given the increasing evidence of migrants' Internet-mediated communication with the homeland (e.g., Kama and Malka 2013; Son 2015; Yin 2015).

In addition to Internet-mediated engagement with the Korean media via laptop computers, tablets, or smartphones, most interviewees in the study constantly used smartphones for networking with other Korean migrants in their local community or left-behind family members in the homeland. For the respondents, all of whom owned smartphones, Korean-based communication apps were widely used. In particular, the instant-messaging app KakaoTalk and the social network app KakaoStory are two of the most popular smartphone apps; they constitute a mobile platform that was developed by Korean venture company Kakao Corp. in 2010. The apps have, until recently, been more popular than their Western counterparts, such as Facebook and WhatsApp, amongst Korean smartphone users in Korea and overseas (See Choi 2013).

These Korean-based communication tools served as connections with the homeland, on the one hand, and were used to explore relationships with local Koreans in the host country context, on the other. For transnational communication with families and/or left-behind friends, the KakaoTalk smartphone app was most commonly used. While the choice of a specific communication tool seemed to depend on which tool the particular recipient in Korea preferred, KakaoTalk was considered a more intimate tool overall. For example, So Hui, a single woman in her late twenties, noted:

> When I'm back at my place after work, I usually call my family members (in Korea). My mom often sends me KakaoTalk messages, although my dad doesn't have a smartphone (and, thus, has no access to the KakaoTalk app). (…). To talk to my friends, I use KakaoTalk, I-message (iPhone messaging tool), or Facebook. KakaoTalk is widely used among Koreans. I can use I-message only with those who use iPhones, and some folks

> don't use Facebook. I use Facebook with friends who are kind of close but not absolutely close.

For So Hui, who was employed by a Korean-owned small business in Vancouver under the PNP and was seeking permanent residency, transnational communication via KakaoTalk constituted a routine component of her migrant daily life. In a similar vein, Sang Han, a Kelowna-based man in his early forties, noted that he frequently used the communication app KakaoTalk with local Koreans:

> If I am not well and am, thus, unable to go to a meeting, I may say, "I cannot go to the meeting" on KakaoTalk. Then, people will send me a KaTalk (abbreviation of KakaoTalk) message… "I have been told you are not well. Are you OK? Take care of yourself." I feel grateful for their care.

Several interviewees pointed out KakaoTalk's group-chat function as one of the most frequently used tools for arranging meetings with other Korean migrants in their neighbourhoods. However, in comparison to messaging apps that were commonly used by most interviewees, only a few interviewees were actively posting their pictures, stories, and comments on social networking sites/apps at the time of the interviews, although they had previously used them more frequently. For example, So Hui explained that her use of social media had been less frequent because she felt that her life in Canada had gradually become routine and busy, thereby causing her to feel that she no longer had new stories and pictures to share:

> I used to post many pictures on my KakaoStory for my mom and sister in Korea. (…) However, these days, I don't take pictures and post them, because every day is the same. I feel like since last Christmas, my life has just been recurring. So I'm worried; I'm worried about having to tell people about my life (via KakaoStory).

By always being online, the Korean migrants seemed to maintain a sense of continuity, consistency, and coherence, all of which are likely to be challenged in the process of immigration (Garza-Guerrero 1974). In particular, the Korean migrants' constant access to the Kakao platform seems similar to the Chinese migrants in Yin's (2015) study who relied on China-based SNSs and apps in the Australian context. That is, by always being online, especially via smartphones, transnational migrants are connected simultaneously to their left-behind homelands and to their current locations. In this process, ethnic language-based social media tend to be popularly adopted, as they conveniently help to carry over the migrants' previous contacts from their homelands, to share homeland news, and to reach and establish new contacts in the diasporic communities in the host countries. Of course, the respondents did not exclusively use Korean-based social media outlets but also accessed global outlet such as Facebook. However, even in the user of Facebook, their major contacts were Koreans in Korea or in Canada. For some respondents, Facebook was perceived as a good source of information about social event in the host society (See Mao and Quian 2015).

Korean language-based online communities, many of which are hosted by Korean-based portal sites, such as Daum and Naver, were used by some interviewees to explore relationships with other Korean migrants in their neighbourhoods. For example, a few single migrants participated in ethno–local online communities whose members had similar hobbies, and they thus met up with other Korean migrants to engage in offline activities and to socialize. Sa Rang,

a single woman in her early thirties, noted:

> Once I got a job and felt settled here, I realized that I missed Koreans. I thought I would have heart-to-heart talks with my Korean friends whenever I faced challenges here. There are online clubs on UVanU [an online community that includes numerous small groups and posting sections for Vancouver-based Korean migrants]. I joined one of those clubs and got to know Koreans, and gradually their friends, and their friends' friends (…)

Sa Rang, who had been in Canada for over four years and had been working two jobs at non-Korean-owned businesses, had a number of local (non-Korean) acquaintances and friends. She was the only interviewee who had more non-Korean than Korean friends in Canada, and she thus looked for Koreans with whom she could have "heart-to-heart talks."

In comparison to frequent online access to the homeland media, locally based Korean media, such as Vancouver-based Korean language newspapers and their web forums, seemed to be less popular amongst Korean migrants. Interviewees in both cities sometimes, if not often, accessed the Canadian-based Korean language newspapers' web sites or their printed versions (in the case of Vancouver-based residents) to obtain general information about settlement or to view Korean-targeted classified ads. Compared to their Vancouver counterparts, the migrants in Kelowna had limited access to the printed copies of the Korean language daily or weekly newspapers that were distributed to the public free of charge in Korean-populated areas in Vancouver. While those Vancouver-based Korean newspapers had their online versions, they did not include sufficiently up-to-date information needed by the migrants residing in the smaller neighbouring cities, such as Kelowna. Overall, given the interviewees' accounts, although the Korean ethnic media has, until recently, been known for its role in building local ethnic communities (Jin and Kim 2011), its impact as a news provider does not seem as significant as some previous studies have suggested. The ethnic media (locally based Korean language media) were not identified as a major source of news amongst the interviewees, but rather as a platform for Korean ethnic-targeted advertisements. With migrants' increasing and more direct access to the homeland media via the Internet, the role of the locally based ethnic media appears to decrease.[6] The Korean migrants preferred to access Korean-based news portals, such as Naver and Daum, or to obtain word-of-mouth information rather than accessing the locally based Korean language media.

The migrants' immersion in the ethnic language Internet demonstrated a particular cultural appropriation of technology. First, the migrants' use of the Internet was largely focused on the remediation of the homeland's broadcast media or popular media via laptop computers, tablets, and smartphones. That is, TV programs were diffused and delivered through various Internet sites. Second, the Internet was appropriated for the migrants' connection to the homeland and the host country. In this process, the homeland-based social networking apps, which were easily built into smartphones, remediated face-to-face communication transnationally or within a local Korean community in the host society. Third, migrants'

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[6] The decreased role of ethnic media can also be attributed to its highly commercialized nature, as well as to a lack of journalism. Owing to the lack of financial and human resources, the ethnic media in Vancouver has tended to rely heavily on the mainstream homeland media's news rather than reporting neighbourhood stories; thus, the role of the Korean ethnic media's contribution to cultural citizenship has been questioned (Jin and Kim 2011; Yu and Murray 2007).

extensive access to the homeland's Internet content and services appears to be in parallel with the decreasing role of the locally produced Korean language media. These findings appear to resonate with Hiller and Franz's (2004) claim that the Internet serves migrants for instrumental and affective purposes (Hiller and Franz 2004). The Korean migrants in the present study used the Internet to obtain information required for settlement and, more importantly, to contribute to the affective dimension of post-migration life, such as constant and continuous communication via networking apps, social media, and online streamed homeland TV.

The Migrant Appropriation of the Host Media

While the Korean immigrants in the study frequently accessed the Internet, they had little engagement with the English language media. Most of them had limited exposure to public media services or any other commercial broadcast media in the host country, which was in sharp contrast to their ordinary exposure to the homeland media via the Internet. For migrants who face linguistic and cultural barriers to their enjoyment of the host country's mainstream media, access to first-language media might not be unexpected (Yin 2015). Thus, although the public service broadcast system in Canada has been established on a relatively solid basis (especially compared to its southern neighbour, the US), the Korean migrants in the present study appeared to make limited use of the content.

In explaining why they might not consume the news and entertainment programs of the host country, the interviewees often identified cultural and/or socioeconomic barriers. Primarily, due to their lack of English skills, the interviewees had difficulty fully understanding the host country's media content. The content of the Canadian media was depicted as "difficult" or "uninteresting" to them. In addition, a few interviewees, who sometimes accessed Canadian TV programs and had self-identified as relatively confident English speakers, pointed out that Canadian programs lacked diversity and were indistinguishable from their American counterparts in many cases. Indeed, they had a common difficulty with identifying Canadian-made media content, especially in comparison to American-made content. This confusion may resonate with a long-term concern about the dominant American influence on Canadian media and culture (Meisel 1986). Given the interviewees' responses, the host country's media content did not necessarily accommodate the needs of diverse populations. While the public broadcast programming is intended to "reflect the multicultural and multiracial nature of Canada," it also aims to facilitate a shared national culture for both official national language (English and French) communities (Government of Canada 2015). In this respect, it is likely that the public broadcast media may not satisfy migrant populations. In fact, in the province of British Columbia, where the present study was conducted, over 26% of Canadians spoke a language other than English or French at home as of 2011 (Statistics Canada 2015d).

The interviewees in the present study initially attempted to expose themselves to the Canadian media—public radio and news programs in particular—which could be played during their mundane daily routines (e.g., during breakfast and dinner or while doing housework); however, their efforts at immersion did not necessarily lead to their enjoyment of the content. Few interviewees enjoyed any Canadian media program on a regular basis. However, this does not mean that the Korean migrants were entirely unaware of important Canadian current affairs, as they acquired local information from their mostly Korean colleagues. Some Vancouver-based respondents could easily come across free printed newspapers, such as the *Metro*, in public places and were, thus, sometimes informed of current affairs.

Moreover, TV subscription fees were often identified as a factor that restricted the Korean migrants' access to Canadian content. Although, in principle, public broadcast TV

channels—the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) in particular—are available to every resident for free, the reception of the channels requires a digital converter box or a particular TV set with a built-in digital tuner. Thus, TV viewers in Canada tend to subscribe to program packages offered by commercial cable/digital TV providers. Among the interviewees, the unsubscriber rate appeared to be much higher than the Canadian national average of 16% (Canadian Press 2015), as more than 2/3 of the interviewees did not subscribe to TV program packages that enabled access to public programming. Several interviewees complained about the subscription fees for TV services. For example, Dong Su, a man in his mid-thirties who immigrated two years ago and was an employee at a small Korean business, explained why he rarely watched Canadian TV programs:

> I don't watch Canadian TV because I have to pay for it. I have to pay for it. And I work long hours these days. Also, at home, my wife watches Korean programs, such as news and dramas, on the Internet. (…) Here in Canada, I have to have a cable subscription to watch TV. [Before coming to Canada,] I had anticipated that I could watch at least two or three channels for free—something like free news channels. However, I noticed that I had to pay to watch even those channels. I feel disappointed. I pay taxes, yet I have to pay again to watch basic TV channels. [So, I don't subscribe to any TV services.]

Even those who subscribed to a commercial TV service package tended not to be interested in watching TV. For example, Na Min, a Vancouver-based single man in his early thirties who was a wage earner at a small Korean ethnic business, noted:

> I have a television set in my room. I subscribe to a package that includes basic channels, but I don't watch them much anyway. More often, I use the television set to watch Korean entertainment programs [streamed on the Internet] on a bigger screen. I rarely watch local TV. (…) I've never been drawn to Canadian TV programs. In my free time, whenever I want to feel relaxed, I watch Korean entertainment programs that make me laugh.

Overall, the interviewees noted that Canada's media environment was inconvenient for them, especially compared to that of their homeland, which is known for its fast and extensive telecommunications system. For some interviewees, Canadian radio and TV programs were often described as a type of "white noise" that was played in their small business workplaces, at home, or while driving. Thus, even those who were exposed to over-the-air Canadian content did not seem to share mass media moments that were "signposts of collective memory and identity" (Taras 2015: 28).

While the interview participants tended to express a need for further integration into the host society, some did not consider the Canadian media an essential means for this integration. However, whether or not they overtly expressed a desire to access the Canadian media, the migrants' integration into the dominant Canadian culture appeared to be very limited at the time of the interviews. In addition, regardless of their length of stay in Canada, some interviewees did not feel the need for cultural integration into the host society. For example, Sang Han, a single man in his early forties, who worked at a non-Korean-owned business in Kelowna for five years, described his migrant life positively; yet, he did not feel obliged to engage with "Canadian culture" nor use broadcast media as a method of doing so. His attitude might coincide with Son's (2015) study finding that Korean immigrant women in their thirties and forties who had a higher socioeconomic status did not feel the need to assimilate culturally into the host society. In the

present study, Sang Han, who was a professional worker at a large Canadian-based business, was one of several respondents who were not necessarily eager to access the Canadian media and culture.

Not surprisingly, most respondents expressed a strong sense of belonging as Koreans. However, they expressed difficulty with developing a sense of belonging to the local host community. Given the importance of building new social networks in the host society during the post-migration period (Bleich et al. 2015), it seemed questionable how the ethnic language-oriented use of the Internet could contribute to the migrants' integration into local communities beyond the Korean ethnic bubble. This maintenance of the ethnic bubble via the Internet might be problematic for some migrants who sought to engage in the host society's dominant cultural system. In contrast to a few respondents, such as Sang Han, who were not keen on becoming culturally integrated into the host society, some interviewees expressed a desire to enhance their sense of belonging to the host community, and in the migration context, the Korean language Internet was sometimes perceived as a simultaneously helpful and detrimental means of doing so. According to Su Chan, a Vancouver-based single man in his early thirties,

> The Internet helps us [Koreans in Canada] survive without any problem even if we speak Korean all day. Without the Internet, people would have to integrate more into Canadian society. However, because of the Internet, people don't feel like it's necessary to learn complex English and to get into the society. It's like Koreans here have their own island because of the Internet.

Su Chan recently obtained permanent residency after more than two years of temporary foreign worker status under the PNP. For him, the ethnic use of the Internet appeared to mean being stuck in the past, while cultural integration through the host society's media seemed to signify looking forward. He was one of a few respondents who expressed their dissatisfaction with Korean immigrants' lack of cultural literacy and local knowledge, as often exemplified by going to concerts and the cinema, reading local best-selling (English) books, and having knowledge of current affairs in the host society; interestingly, they attributed such a lack of cultural literacy largely or partly to their constant exposure to the Korean language Internet.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study has shown that, despite the differences in the visibility and size of the Korean community, the interviewees in both Vancouver and Kelowna were immersed in the Korean language Internet. They acquired a great deal of information through the homeland media online rather than from the host country's mainstream media or the English language Internet. The Internet was often considered a major outlet for seeking information and maintaining a sense of cultural continuity. Meanwhile, the role of conventional, locally based ethnic media, such as local Korean newspapers, was limited, especially among the interviewees in Kelowna, where no Korean media outlet was established. In comparison, some Vancouver-based Koreans still tended to be constantly exposed to locally produced Korean language media online and offline.

The Korean migrants' frequent access to homeland media online in the present study might not be substantially different from the ways in which many other immigrant groups use the media (e.g., Kama and Malka 2013; Yin 2015; Son 2015). However, in comparison to these studies, which included diverse groups of migrants in terms of their ages and occupations, the current study focused on migrants who were full-time unskilled workers. The full-time workers, who were not necessarily equipped with rich media resources and media literacy about English

language media outlets, appeared to develop a strong attachment to the ethnic language Internet during the post-migration period; thus, their anxieties about physical relocation were substantially reduced. As the Korean migrants in the study landed in the host country during their adulthood, they experienced difficulties with language, employment, and social networking. Reportedly, Koreans in Canada tend to deal with a relatively high level of acculturative stress, even in comparison to other ethnic groups, because they are frustrated with their socioeconomic attainment in Canada, due to their underemployment (Kim and Noh 2015).

In the Korean migrants' perception, the Internet was contrasted with the host country's mainstream broadcast media. In particular, the Internet was considered an abundant, egalitarian, and default media, while the host country's mainstream media seemed to be characterized by its access barriers, such as linguistic and cultural literacy. Indeed, while many migrants in the study had limited access to the mainstream media due to the lack of sociocultural resources in the host country, they tended to consider the Internet a default media setting that offered abundant information to anyone. Although they had to subscribe to paid service packages for Internet access on most occasions, not unlike other media services such as satellite TV, the Internet was regarded as an infrastructure that was almost equally diffused without restriction. Thus, Internet use was taken for granted as an almost "natural" media practice, and the interviewees, therefore, rarely reported any barriers to its use (with the exception of its speed, which was perceived as slower than they were accustomed to in Korea). In comparison, a few interviewees complained about the Canadian broadcast media's lack of cultural diversity in its content and/or about difficulty with access, which is mainly due to its fees or the language barrier.

Given the present study's findings, on the surface, it may not appear that the new breed of migrants are not be much different from their earlier counterparts in regard to their low level of cultural integration into the host society (Hurh and Kim 1984). Thus, the role of the ethnic bubble may not be substantially challenged in the era of transnational digital media. However, the ethnic language Internet may not simply reiterate the ethnic bubble, which existed even prior to the emergence of the Internet. While formerly the ethnic enclave was a geographically restricted, the recent ethnic use of the Internet may virtually expand the ethnic bubble and constantly reconnect the migrant community to its homeland. This process of remaking the ethnic bubble in the digital era may affect how migrants *feel about* their difficulty regarding cultural integration into the host society. That is, for this new breed of migrants, who are equipped with the ethnic language Internet, a lack of cultural integration may not necessarily be seen as a failure of cultural adjustment but rather may be considered a likely option of cultural adjustment (See Son 2016).

While acknowledging the increasing role of the Internet in migrants' negotiation of their migrant life we should avoid jumping to a conclusion that romanticizes the ethnic language Internet as an essentially empowering medium that facilitates the digital diaspora. We need to further consider how the celebratory discourse about digital diasporas may obscure migrants' "lack of physical space for expression" in the host society (Marat 2016: 62). As the host society's public sphere may not sufficiently accommodate cultural diversity, marginalized groups, such as migrant workers, may remain voiceless in the public. Despite the increasingly universal access to the Internet and policy emphasis on the neutrality of the Internet (McIver 2010), user experiences may be highly fragmented in terms of the user's subject position within the seemingly open cyberspace (Raboy and Shtern 2010). Recent studies have also shown that migrants' needs may not be sufficiently accommodated by the host country's Internet infrastructure and policies (Caidi et al. 2010). Thus, in future research, it seems important to

examine further how the digital diaspora can evolve as a participatory space. In so doing, we can explore how migrants negotiate multiple senses of belonging not only with their homelands or ethnic communities but also with the diverse residents of the host societies in the emerging era of the digital diaspora.

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