THE USES OF THE INTERNET IN CANADA : WHAT KINDS OF EMPOWERMENT FOR IMMIGRANTS ?

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Objectives

- To present the portrait on the uses of the Internet by immigrants in Canada
- To present the methodology of the research
- To analyze the preliminary results on the possibility for empowerment of immigrants through their uses of Internet

Foreword

- A special thank to the Canadian Internet Registration Authority (CIRA) which provided a grant for this research: https://cira.ca/

- Many thanks to our research team: Layla Belmahi, Stacey Cacéus, Rosalie Colette, Jean-Guillaume Loubet

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Portrait of the uses of the Internet by immigrants in Canada

- Canada receives annually around 250.000 immigrants
  - 2015 was a record with 320.000 immigrants
- Ontario, Quebec, British Colombia and Alberta: 4 of the 10 provinces and 3 territories of Canada that receive most of the migrants in the country
- Low income rates of new immigrants are generally higher than those of Canadian-born citizens (Statistiques Canada, 2014).

Portrait of the uses of the Internet by immigrants in Canada

- Data (Statistiques Canada, 2012) shows that "In 2012, 83% of Canadian households had access to the Internet at home, compared with 79% in 2010".

- No statistics exists for immigrants' uses of the Internet

Problematics of the research (or action research)

- As the first pancanadian research on the uses of the Internet by migrants, we wanted to:

    - To recruit and consult with people who have immigrated about how they use the Internet to integrate into Canadian society and to look for a job;

    - To support people who have immigrated and the organizations that help them;

    - To propose strategies for using the Internet to empower people who have immigrated.

    Research question: How can immigrants become empowered and how do they participate to Canadian society through their uses of the Internet? / comment les immigrants s'autonomisent-ils et participent-ils à la société canadienne à travers leurs usages d'Internet

Theoretical Framework

- Communication studies

- The symbolic aspect of communication (Carey):

  - « a symbolic process whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired, and transformed ».

  - Wolton (2005 p.13) : « Communication is always the research of relation and of sharing with others. La communication, c'est toujours la recherche de la relation et du partage avec autrui. It goes through all activities: leisure, work, education, politics. It concerns all social circles, social classes, all ages, continents, rich and poor alike. »

Theoretical Framework

- For Gudykunst and Kim (1992, pp.13-14), intercultural communication « is a transactional, symbolic process involving the attribution of meaning between people from different cultures ».

- Intercultural Communication and Diasporic Studies
  - In Communication studies, "communication processes are dealt with maintaining community links within the diaspora, as well as in the use of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) by members of the diaspora (Stoiciu, 2013) »

- The litterature does exist on diaspora and digital media, on immigrants and traditional media but is barely existant with immigrants and their use of the Internet in the context of integration

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Our research methodology

- Mixed method approach: qualitative method and quantitative method
- Qualitative method: semi directed interviews with 100 immigrants in the 4 provinces of Canada (Calgary, Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver)

Preliminary results of the research

5 themes emerged:

1. Independence
2. Immigration assistance programme
3. Internet
4. Employement
5. Training

Preliminary results of the research: Independence

Movement:

"Independent, I think Google maps really help be more independent, because in Canada it's really easy to move around the street, because they are all named. You can get anywhere like, you can transport yourself even by bus or anything like that, you can go from one point to another point. It's really easy to move around, you can't get lost, I don't think you can get lost. (from Calgay)"

"Yeah. Because hum… internet helped me. Because my husband ten hours working. He is going to job… hum… sunset to sunrise. And I'm all alone the day. I need to go to outside. I need to bank or the hospital or a doctor, shopping, I need the internet. (from Toronto)"

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Preliminary results of the research: Independence

Language skills:

"once you get to know the area, once you make good communication skills, I think you can be independent."

Knowledge:

"I'm more independent because I use the Internet more and more here and it's very helpful and it's dependant, yeah I'm learning more and more I think so (laugh) because I'm using more and more Internet here because yeah because of the wifi, it's not in my own country and the speed is good and that's why I'm using more and more Internet and I'm earning a lot I feel that."

Preliminary results of the research: Employement

Existing bariers to employability:

"Mexico, just only because I came here ten years ago, when I finish my study I was 20… when I was 25 years. And I start working for a financial advisor. I applied the first time and the first time they hired me and I worked in there. Three years, working in a financial advisor. After that I came here. It was no… It was really difficult to find a job you know. Because it was my experience, they have my cover and everything. And experience and everything. That was preparing me for coming here. Because when you came, personally you have a master, whatever you have, you don't have any experience to prove here that you have this experience, or Canadian experience. That is the thing. Here you need to start to zero. Yeah. (From Vancouver)"

Preliminary results of the research: Employement

Job search process:

"Because when I first come here, I searched, and then…. Any job offer, or any job post, you find that "please attach your CV and your cover letter". Back in Egypt, I never heard about something called "cover letter". So I went to my husband and asked him: "What's a cover letter?". We don't have a cover letter in Egypt. We just send our CV and… "

Analysis

Our respondents think that Internet enables their empowerment:

BUT

They are realistic about their necessary process of adaptation to their new country

Their capacity to use the Internet is important for them to be up-to-date on a professional perspective

They were empowered Internet's users before migrating to Canada

Conclusion

- What if imigrants uses the Internet in order to reinforce their diasporic status?

- https://integration.uqam.ca

Questions? Thank you!

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