Diaspora 2.0: building identity with a Selfie

Mireia Moré

Supervisor: Carles Roca
Course: 2016/2017
Research Project of the MA in International Studies on Media, Power, and Difference
Department of Communication
Universitat Pompeu Fabra
ABSTRACT

This PhD proposal contains a literature review and methodology for a future research about the digital identity of the Senegalese and Gambian diaspora communities that currently live in Catalonia. I propose a virtual ethnographic approach for studying the Selfies (self-generated photographs) which are uploaded on Facebook and Instagram by particular individuals from the Senegalese and Gambian diasporic communities. The objective of the research is to study how the new Selfie phenomenon allows the Senegalese and Gambian diasporic communities in Catalonia to perform their identity and cultural behaviours through the new social media. The methodology is composed of a detailed Selfie and social media text analysis as well as a participant observation approach and virtual interviews. The expected outcomes are to understand how the social media allows for the creation of an imagined community in a globalized and interconnected context and to comprehend how the Selfie permits the self-representation of the diasporic communities.

KEYWORDS

Diaspora; Senegalese and Gambian communities; social media; selfie phenomenon; self-representation; digital identity;
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction ............................................................................................................. 4  
   1.1 Overview........................................................................................................ 4  
   1.2 Topic: Diaspora 2.0: building identity with a Selfie........................................... 5  
   1.3 Significance of the study................................................................................... 6  

2. Research Problem ................................................................................................. 7  
   2.1 Expected Outcomes............................................................................................ 7  

3. Literature Review .................................................................................................. 8  
   3.1 Theoretical traditions and currents of thought for framing the question......... 8  
   3.2 Review and critique of related empirical research............................................. 13  
   3.3 Theoretical framework...................................................................................... 17  

4. Design and Methodology ....................................................................................... 24  
   4.1 Overall approach and rationale......................................................................... 24  
   4.2 The implications of using a virtual ethnography................................................ 27  
   4.3 Population and sampling.................................................................................... 29  
      4.3.1 Population.................................................................................................. 29  
      4.3.2 Senegalese and Gambian immigrants in Catalonia.................................... 30  
   4.4 Sampling strategies............................................................................................. 32  
   4.5 Data collection methods...................................................................................... 33  
      4.5.1 Participant Observation............................................................................. 35  
      4.5.2 Interviews.................................................................................................. 37  
   4.6 Data analysis and interpretation procedures...................................................... 38  
      4.6.1 Participant observation and interview data analysis.................................... 41  
      4.6.2 Analysing visual data............................................................................... 42  
      4.6.3 Narratives and arguments......................................................................... 44  
   4.7 Anticipated ethical issues..................................................................................... 45  
   4.8 Limitations.......................................................................................................... 46  

5. Main concepts of the research.............................................................................. 47  

6. References............................................................................................................... 49  

7. Calendar and Schedule......................................................................................... 53
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

The diasporic communities and their identity are a well-known study object, not only because of its importance in the current globalized society, but also for its evolution and reinterpretation in the new social media.

One of the most important characteristics about the diaspora is the process of self-awareness and self-imagination by which the individuals become a part of a community. In this sense, there are some theoretical and empirical works about the modernization of the diasporic movements and their spaces of communication (Hall, 1990; Tsagarousianou, 2004).

For considering themselves as a part of a community, individuals must have at first the ability to create their own identity. Only then they would eventually imagine themselves as a part of a whole group. The creation of identity process in a multicultural and globalized context has also been a very important object of study for the last decades, as we will see in this research proposal.

In a globalized context, social media represent spaces of communication in which identity, meaning and boundaries of diaspora communities are continually constructed, debated and reimagined. Therefore, the sense of contemporaneity and synchronicity made possible by diaspora communities in social media enables new ways of “coexistence” and “expressing together” (Tsagarousianou, 2004: 55).

According to the new social media studies and approaches, the creation of identity process is also influenced by the new technologies and the new forms of communication on the Internet. This new media is a key for self-expression as well (Rabadán, 2016).

Inside these new digital imaginaries, we can also observe another new method for the autobiography. In this case, the Selfie could be the greatest example of self-reference. The Selfie phenomenon (Snift, 2015: 1588) or a self-generated digital photographic portraiture
has become a social practice to send different messages to different individuals, communities and audiences. At the same time, the Selfie is a modern tool for sharing identity in the social media (Leurs, 2015).

1.2 Topic: Diaspora 2.0: building identity with a Selfie

In the Web 2.0, where social media enables a user-generated content, the Selfie phenomenon gains strength. A Selfie, or a self-generated digital photographic portraiture, has become a cultural artefact and social practice - a gesture that is intended to send different messages to different individuals, communities and audiences (Senft, 2015: 1589).

In a communicative spectrum, the Selfie phenomenon represents not only the presentation of the users in the social context of interaction, but also a self-reflective practice upon themselves and their personal identity (Rabadán, 2016).

At the same time, the new social media paradigm is able to act as a mirror for a whole community identity. The importance of understanding the factors contributing to the diaspora communities’ construction of identity is especially relevant for comprising the new communication context in a globalised world.

Although a significant number of researchers have studied the diasporic communities’ identity construction process, there is a lack of information about how the Selfie phenomenon is affecting them. Considering how the new social media is affecting the personal relations and collective imaginaries, it could be interesting to investigate how the diasporic communities have been affected too.

To better understand this identity building process, this research has the aim of studying the Gambian and Senegalese diasporic communities in Catalonia. Assuming that Gambian and Senegalese people have many aspects in common (like the culture, ethnicities, languages and history) and their migration history in Catalonia is very similar as well, it is necessary to study both communities in conjunction.
1.3. Significance of the study

This research will to provide a better understanding about the identity building process of Diaspora Communities. In fact, the collective culture or imaginary is a very important matter if we think about the adaptation and cohabitation of migrants and their descendants.

In this case, there does not exist any previous study about the Gambian and Senegalese collectives that live in Catalonia. In this sense, it could be an opportunity to comprehend the characteristics of this collective and to know more things about their identity construction on social media.
2. RESEARCH PROBLEM

The purpose of this study is to understand how the Senegalese and Gambian diasporic communities that live in Catalonia are able to represent their identity through their self-representation in social media. Specifically, it aims to comprehend the Selfie phenomenon as a narrative to express their identity on Facebook and Instagram networks. The research questions that guide this study are as follows:

1. Have the social media become a space where the Senegalese and Gambian diasporic communities in Catalonia share believes and opinions related to their culture?
2. Is the collective identity of the Senegalese and Gambian diasporic communities in Catalonia recognizable within the social media networks?
3. Do the narratives of Selfies (self-generated photographs) reflect some cultural patterns of the Senegalese and Gambian diasporic communities in Catalonia?

2.1 Expected outcomes

This research will have the following expected outcomes:

- To discover the particularities of the Senegalese and Gambian diasporic community in Catalonia as well as their principal identity characteristics.
- To understand how the social media allows for the creation of an imagined community where a diasporic community can share opinions and experiences.
- To comprehend how the Selfie phenomenon plays a key role in the self-representation practices through the cyberspace.
3 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Theoretical traditions and currents of thought for framing the question

The main objective of this study is to comprehend how a particular diasporic community is able to represent their identity through their self-representation in social media. In these terms, for reasoning the theoretical traditions by which this work is going to frame its purpose is necessary to consider the Hall’s ideas of identity and Diaspora.

According to Hall (1990: 223), the identity is a “production” instead of an already accomplished fact. Therefore, the identity creation is always in process and never complete. At the same time, identity is always constituted within, not outside, representation.

If we talk about the identity in a non-individual but in a collective sense, according to Hall a community self-identity could be also called a “cultural identity”, which is a sort of collective “one true self” made of a shared history and ancestry. In this sense, a cultural identity reflects the common historical experiences and cultural codes which provide the individuals with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning (Hall 1990: 231).

Once we have defined the collective identity creation, we are able now to talk about the specific process by which a diasporic community builds a self-imaginary. According to Hall (1990: 231), a common knowledge, which is provided by the process of identity creation, may offer an imaginary coherence on the experience of dispersal and fragmentation. By fragmentation, Hall refers to the history of all enforced Diasporas. At the same time, Hall exposes the example of the diasporic communities (like Afro-American collectives who live in the United States or in various Caribbean countries like Jamaica) which identify themselves as a part of Africa due to their colonial origins. As he explains, they see Africa as a mother of their different civilisations:

“Africa is the name of the missing term, the great aporia, which lies at the center of our cultural identity and gives it a meaning which, until recently, it lacked” (Hall 1990: 231).
This theory could be a perfect framing for our study. Since the object of our study is to comprehend the creation of the Gambian and Senegalese diasporic identities in Catalonia, we can consider the explanation by Hall regarding the idea of “Africa as the missing term” (Hall 1990: 231). This common past in this particular community may take a critical role in the creation of their identity.

Furthermore, it is necessary to notice the hint which Hall exposes in his theory: “Cultural identity is a matter of “becoming” as well as of “being” (Hall 1990: 224). In other words, collective identity undergoes constant transformation and, as he points, they are also a subject to the continuous “play of history, culture and power” (Hall 1990: 225).

About the importance of power in the identity creation, according to Foucault (1982:778) the word “subject” may have two meanings: To be subject to someone else by control and dependence or to have an own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge; in both cases, it is suggested a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to.

At this point, it is imperative to take into account the relations of power in the creation of identity. As Foucault explains, the subjects refuse what he calls “the government of individualization” (1982:778), which is not an institution, nor group, elite or class but a technique, a form of power. To dissociate these power relations, the individuals assert their right to be different and they underline everything which makes individuals truly individual. These struggles revolve around the question of “who we are?” and represent a refusal of a scientific or administrative inquisition which determines who one is (Foucault, 1982:781). In other words, Foucault suggests that the creation of individual and community identity is strongly related with the power they are fighting against. This is a very interesting point of view if we consider how a diasporic community builds their subjective cultural codes and why they even need a proper identity.

If we consider a more recent theoretical tradition which is, at the same time, inspired by both Hall and Foucault, we can take into account the assumptions by Brah (1996), an Indian sociologist who migrated to Uganda and Great Britain and discover how her own diaspora community is treated in occidental European countries. As a result of her experience, she has developed some theories about the diaspora and its connections with identity, power and difference.
According to Brah, identity is a process strongly related to subjectivity:

“The subjectivity- the space where the processes which add sense to our relationship with the world is developed - is the modality by which the nature of the subject is experimented as identity. Therefore, identity is neither fixed nor one; instead, is rather a multiplicity of relationships in constant transformation. In this process, the identities assume specific patrons, like in a kaleidoscope, which take into account different combinations of personal, social and historical circumstances” (Brah, 1996: 176).

In the same vein, during the identity process, subjectivity transforms its nature of contradiction and instability into something which includes coherence, continuity and stability (Brah, 1996: 176).

Regarding personal identity, it is necessary to observe how processes change when we talk about the collective identity of a particular community. According to Brah, collective identity is the significance process by which the common experience around a central differentiation concept (for instance, the status, the caste or the religion) is provided with a particular meaning (Brah, 1996: 187). Considering collective identity as a process, we have to take into account that identity is never fully constituted. In this sense, it is more appropriate to talk about discourses and historical memories that are able to form a certain identification bases in an economic, cultural and political context.

Furthermore, it is necessary to consider if personal identity would be identical to a collective identity due to its resemblance and context. In fact, these two processes are absolutely distinct because of its implications: collective identity is constructed by rewriting subjectivity in order to acclaim the collective experience, in an actual not subjective but political process. In other words, collective identity discourses are reinterpretations of some ways of looking - of remembering, recollecting, rewording, reconstructing - to a particular collective history. How is this collective history formed? In fact, these common experiences have significance as long as they are formed by a discourse based on difference (Brah, 1996: 192).

At this point, Brah’s theories about identity and difference come into contact with Foucault’s assumptions of power. As Brah (1996: 201) shows, all discursive formations are power spaces that are built in a performative way though the economic, political and cultural practices. In this case, Brah relates Foucault’s explanation about the theory of power and his specific clarification about how a practice actually produces power. In fact,
as she argues, every discourse is a practice, which implies at the same time that every discourse produces power. In this sense, all kinds of discourses produce power: visual images, music, visual arts like painting or sculpture, the cinematography, and even the communication technologies. The main concept of difference, therefore, is related to the diverse manners by which the specific discourses of difference are built and will always depend on the context (Brah, 1996: 212).

The fact that even communication technologies are actual discourses which produce power is quite fascinating, because its implications would eventually be really important in this study. The new social media, therefore, is not only important in terms of identity (as we will see in the following pages) but also in terms of power discourse.

In relation to identity, it is imperative to mention that it is formed in and through culture (Brah, 1996: 230). As Brah assumes, culture is the symbolic construction of a social group’s vital experiences. In this sense, culture is the chronicle of a group’s history, which is always different from other group’s culture. These cultural differences are built because of the socio-political and economic relations, which mean that, as different social groups with different access to power and privilege are hierarchically organized, their cultures are ordered in the same terms as well. As a result, the most valued ethics and behaviours in a society are probably the ones that are hold by dominant groups (Brah, 1996: 231). What is important about Brah’s theories of culture and identity is that cultural discussions have to be understood in the context of power relationships between different hierarchical groups.

Besides Brah’s statements about power, difference and identity, her explanations about gender implications in diaspora’s affairs are especially significant. As she evaluates, although women might be less visible than men in the global political scene, political processes are inevitably marked by the feminine gender constructions. According to her, feminine gender is built and represented in different forms depending on many power relations, which depend at the same time on economical, political and ideological processes. Inside this social relations structures women does not exist simply as women, but as different categories such as “working-class women”, “farmer women” or “immigrant women” (Brah, 1996: 84).

The main objective of feminist theories such as the one that explains Brah, is to change the social relations based on gender differences. Assuming that gender inequality dominates
every single life sphere, it is imperative to take into account feminist perspectives in this study. The main objective of making allowance for gender relations in diaspora’s identity on social media is not only to assume the matter of gender differences but also to assure the accuracy of the analysis.

Finally, it is needed to mention another significant theory to better comprehend the multiple faces of identity, especially in relation to communities and groups. In this case, we can consider the Communication Theory of Identity (CTI), which shows that identity is “formed, maintained and modified in a communicative process and thus reflects communication” (Hecht, Warren, Jung and Krieger, 2005: 259).

CTI considers identity as a social process that resides in social interaction. Furthermore, this theory recognizes four different layers of identity, which represent different aspects of an individual’s identity and cannot exist isolated from each other. The first one, the personal layer, refers to the individual as “a locus of identity”, which provides understanding about how individuals define themselves in general as well as in particular situations; in the second one, the enactment layer, identity is enacted in communication through messages, so communication becomes the locus of identity; in the third one, the relational layer, relationship is the locus of identity, understanding a “relationship” in multiple situations, like a partnership, friendship or fellowship (for instance, a person would say that he is a husband, an accountant and a friend); in the fourth one, the communal layer, the identity is located in a specific group, where its members establish common group identities on the basis of common characteristics (Hecht, Warren, Jung and Krieger, 2005: 260-262).

The division of identity in four distinct layers would aid to better analyse the nature of self-identification. As the authors explain, the layers can be seen as functioning independently of each other for analytical purposes, but they actually work together showing various aspects of identity depending on the situation (Hecht, Warren, Jung and Krieger, 2005: 265). Nevertheless, what is really significant about CTI is not only its organization which facilitates the investigation of identity, but its application in the field of technology.

When applied to communication technologies, CTI allows us to better understand how in online communication the individual and group identity is usually separated from physical representation. In fact, as the authors observe, technology opens up possibilities for new relationships:
“Relationships can transcend geographic boundaries into areas of the world interactants would not otherwise travel. Rather than identity being situated <<in>> the body and place, information and communication technologies create a <<saturated self>> in which identity is spread across networks of social relationships and roles as well as across space”. (Hecht, Warren, Jung and Krieger, 2005: 270).

As we have already seen, it is essential to take into account the dissimilarities between offline and online communication, as long as it affects to the identity formation of individuals. Even if personal and group identity can be recognized in both cases, the ways by which they are performed are significantly modified because of the usage of communication technologies. Consequently, the methodologies of analysis must also be changed to better comprehend the new technology paradigms, as we will see in the following pages.

3.2 Review and critique of related empirical research

Leurs (2015) has one of the most complete studies about the Diaspora communities and how they interact with social media. In particular, the author conducted a survey to Moroccan-Dutch teenagers about how they would show themselves in their profile pictures in order to be liked by their friends. The objective was to learn more about the norms of online “photographic self-depictions” among young people and their ideal beauty standards. (Leurs, 2015:187)

Although Leurs (2015) conducted a quite reasonable survey, an interview would be a better approach to better know how diasporic communities build their identity and not only why teenager migrants use social media as a self-representation tool. Nevertheless, Leurs (2015) provides a very interesting approach on gender roles in the Selfie phenomenon:

“Besides technological constraints that inscribe themselves upon user self-profiling, the ways in which users stand in for themselves in selfies put on social network sites is also partly influenced by gendered peer norms and expectations. […] These findings suggest shared (youth cultural) norms of gender that go beyond distinct locations and ethnic groups” (Leurs, 2015: 188).

In addition, we can consider the study by Soerjoatmodjo (2016), who did several interviews with teenagers to know why adolescents take Selfies, what Selfie means to them, and what
other responses on their Selfie mean to them. This is a very useful study, since it concludes that teenagers see a Selfie as a way to represent themselves. As Soerjoatmodjo (2016) explains, the theoretical implication is the need to continue exploring the Selfie phenomenon as a means for the search of the identity, which is at the same time one of the objectives of this study.

Wargo (2015) has another remarkable study about how the Selfie phenomenon modifies the gender and sexuality realities in the case of LGBTQ identities. Wargo’s approach (2015) is based on participant observation and active interviews, which represent connective approaches to modernize ethnographic methods. Under my point of view, this is one of the best methods to understand the Web 2.0 reality, mostly in minority community’s studies.

Regarding LGBTQ realities on social media, it is also interesting the study conducted by Dhoest and Szulc (2016). In this study, the authors aim for investigating the performances of migrant gay men on social media. The importance of the topic, as the authors expose, is that their migration background “forces them to negotiate different social, cultural and material contexts” (Dhoest & Szulc, 2016: 1).

More specifically, the research is based on semi-structured face-to-face interviews to two different groups: on the one hand, to second-generation participants, born in Belgium from parents born in Northern Africa, the Middle East and Asia which have strong links on their familiar migration background; on the other hand, the authors interview sexual refugees who had to escape their country of origin because of their sexual orientation (Dhoest & Szulc, 2016: 3). This group differentiation is indeed an outstanding approach to better understand the differences between migrants and diasporic communities: while migrants can actually feel part of a society because of their origins, the diasporic community can only relate their identity because of their roots, but not their origins. It is remarkable, at the same time, that the authors choose for their study a particular population which have faced oppression by reason of their sexuality. As the authors present, despite their differences in relation to their nationality and religiosity, these participants share sexual persecution backgrounds in their home countries (Dhoest & Szulc, 2016: 3).

As a conclusion, the authors discover that both groups are “symmetrically discreet” on their Facebook usage in terms of sexual identity and, in some cases, they actually use two different profiles to avoid context collapse (Dhoest & Szulc, 2016: 8). This striking final stage can provide to future investigations valuable knowledge about the correct procedures
to better understand minorities and, specifically, about how to deal with vulnerable collectives as sexual refugees.

In other terms, it is also necessary to notice the study which Plaza and Below (2014) conducted, which has several interesting implications. This paper, which is based on both quantitative and qualitative data collected from a virtual survey, suggests that social media facilitate “multi-directional caring and a new form of caring for family and friends” in the case of the Caribbean diaspora that live in the United States (Plaza and Below, 2014: 25). As a conclusion, the study shows that Caribbean communities use social media as they have been used other kind of communication methods over time, like letter writing, telegrams, telephones and emails. In this sense, Plaza and Below’s (2014) study is more focused in how this specific diaspora use technology instead of the implications of the new social media as a method to self-expression. Nevertheless, the study is interesting as long as it shows how to use of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

Johnson and Callahan (2013) fulfil another study regarding specific diaspora behaviour on social media. In this case, the authors analyse the social media used by the Garifuna diaspora in the United States with an open-ended survey. The conclusions of this study are clear: social media networks are creating new “virtual cultural cyberspaces” which are extending minority cultures (Johnson and Callahan, 2013: 335). In short, the study demonstrates that culture is changing its traditional geographical models due to the new communications technologies paradigms. This accurate analysis about a diaspora community is quite beneficial for noticing that the globalisation does not represent an obstacle for minority groups anymore. Since homogenisation is not a problem, as this study confirms, by means of social media, it is imperative to examine critically the new forms of communication and self-identification of minority groups such as diasporic communities.

Apart from survey and interview analysis, there are also several ethnographic researches about diasporic communities and social media, such as the one which conduct Hsu (2013). This study analyses the digital performances of the Kominas, a South Asian American punk band which, according to the author, have created a whole digital diasporic community around the transnational music they produce. This ethnographic research uses participant observation, data-mining and geospatial visualization in order to “map the Kominas’ self-made community” (Hsu, 2013: 387). As a result, the analysis exposes that the concept of digital diaspora, as Hsu argues, reconfigures the conventional diaspora-home relationship and the band becomes a new social home for its fans in a “digitally generated and hosted
community” (Hsu, 2013: 394). In this sense, Hsu explores another sphere of diaspora, focusing her discourse in a common referent for the diaspora and not the community itself; this may eventually demonstrate that, apart from a shared history and traditions, a particular group might find their identity in a very specific cultural subject like, for instance, a music band.

Hsu’s ethnographic approach on a diaspora community is, indeed, quite considerable because of its meticulous analysis. As we will see on the following pages, this proposal aims to perform a digital ethnography with a rather similar procedure.

Finally, it is necessary to mention the study by Tynes (2007), which considers the diasporic virtual community of Sierra Leone. Specifically, the research conducts a virtual ethnography about a forum called Leonenet, where the users aim to rebuild and maintain a collective discourse about the nation of Sierra Leone.

In this sense, it is especially interesting the methodologies which Tynes use: content analysis, participant interviews and cultural informants. As we will see in the following pages, this study aims to perform very similar procedures, such as the participant observation and virtual interviews for collecting the necessary data.

As a conclusion, Tynes (2007) shows that the Leonenet platform has a significance within the collective memory of Sierra Leone and contributes to the formation of a virtual nation. This statement demonstrates, indeed, that the Internet can be a space where a diasporic community share opinions and experiences and perform their identity.

Furthermore, it is necessary to notice that Tynes (2007) uses the concept of imagined community for explaining how the users communicate with each other in order to share opinions and ideas about Sierra Leone. This concept of “imagined community” was first developed by Anderson (1983) regarding a “national identity” where the ideas of “Self” and “Other” are mutually constituted (Breuilly, 2016: 640). In other words, an imagined community is built in order to shape the difference between the people which belongs to the community and the people who does not.

What is important about the contributions of Tynes (2007) is that a diasporic community is able to communicate through the social media and transform the cyberspace into a meeting point for performing their identity.
3.3 Theoretical framework

To define a theoretical framework, it is necessary to point out the concepts and assumptions that support this research.

The first main concept is the Diaspora, which is the process of self-awareness and self-imagination by which the individuals become a part of a community. In this sense, diasporic communities try to maintain strong links and identifications with the traditions of “homeland” (Tsagarousianou, 2004: 55). The contemporary globalization flows, however, have deeply affected this place called homeland and, as Tsagarousianou explains, there is no going “home” again for a diasporic community (Tsagarousianou, 2004: 55).

When analysing this kind of diasporic process it is important to understand that this particular community is based on a “sense” or “feeling” of belonging somewhere, even if an eventual “back home” process is not possible anymore. It is also important to notice that the identity of a pictured diasporic community is not fix or preconceived, but built inside the nature of the daily life and in the quotidian stories that are told individually and collectively (Brah, 1996: 98).

Assuming that a diasporic community could be imagined in several ways under different historical circumstances, it is necessary to expose the specificities of the African diaspora, which is the particular population that this study will consider. To do so, it is imperative to do an early assessment to their history and characteristics.

Harris (1996) leads one of the best works about these communities, where he develops a particular meaning of diaspora and gives a precise description of the African communities around the world:

“The African diaspora is a triadic relationship linking a dispersed group of people to the homeland, Africa, and to their host or adopted countries. Diasporas develop and reinforce images and ideas about themselves and their original homelands, as well as affect the economies, politics, and social dynamics of both the homeland and the host country or area”. (Harris, 1996: 12)

Although the possibility of returning to homeland is not valid anymore, it is imperative to think about the presence of diasporic communities on economic, political and social dynamics of both the homeland and the host country. In this sense, the African diaspora
could be also understood, as Harris exposes, as a “triadic relationship” which connects a dispersed group of people to their homeland and their adopted country (Harris, 1996: 15).

Regarding the history of the African diaspora, it is important to notice that these communities had faced both voluntary and involuntary overseas location (Harris, 1996: 15). The heritage of slavery has been a constant in the process of the adaptation to the host country by many generations of Africans, even after the abolitionism period. Apart from this obscure ancestry, it is also remarkable the importance of the establishment of colonial rule in Africa itself during the nineteenth century, when the powerful European countries, such as the Great Britain and France, distribute the whole continent for themselves. Furthermore, the decisions made by Europeans at the Berlin Conference of 1884-85, where the boundaries of the African states were drawn, divided peoples and cultures into different countries (Harris, 1996: 18). From that moment, there was created an internal diaspora, with its consequent population displacement and division inside the main African countries. At the end, the convergence of both the slavery and the colonial period resulted in an economic and political dependence on Europe, which have decisive consequences nowadays.

After the colonial period, there appeared strong identity issues. As Harris discloses, the colonial identity had not fully matured:

“Until the 1960s most Africans in Africa retained a primary ethnic allegiance, while their descendants abroad constituted a <<stateless>> diaspora without a common country of origin, language, religion, or culture. The strength of the connection between Africans and the African diaspora remained essentially their common origin in Africa as a whole and a common social condition (social, economic, and political marginalization) throughout the world” (Harris, 1996:18).

In other words, the damage caused by European colonization and the statement of foreigner boundaries have affected the self-identification of African communities: while they do not feel part of a particular African state because of their occidental implications, they feel part of a whole African culture and society instead.

In conclusion, assuming the abusive and unfair precedents of slavery and colonial period, Harris emphasise that African migrants and their descendants have maintained a consciousness of their homeland and identity while they have adapted to new societies.
In other terms, it is necessary to point out the distinctive features of the new social media communication technologies. To better understand the implications of the new social media paradigms, it is important to compare them with the traditional mass media. First of all, one main difference between old and new communication technologies is interactivity. According to the definition that exposes Perloff (2014), the users in social media are sources as well as receivers. At the same time, these users are capable of shaping, customizing and directing online interactions (Perloff, 2014: 364). By doing so, there occurs an alteration on the traditional mass media broadcasting-recipient relation; instead, the contemporary social media transform formerly-passive mass media receivers into what Perloff calls “full-fledged communicators” (Perloff, 2014: 365).

As the users are at the same time receivers and sources, the social media become more and more personal if we compare them with the traditional mass media. Furthermore, the new social media channels (such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat or Youtube) are able to offer a variety of content, like images, text, videos, animation and transformative multimedia cues. Finally, social media sites can produce individualized content for the users, which have the aim to create communities of “like-minded individuals” (Perloff, 2014: 365).

The new social media paradigm, also known as the Web 2.0, has become one of the most investigated topics in the last years, especially in those that are related to young adults: three out of four adult Internet users under age 25 have a profile on the social networks (Özgüven and Mucan, 2013: 519).

Assuming that social media users are most commonly young adults, it is necessary to notice that new Web 2.0 paradigm promises users to become active agents over their own representations (Leurs, 2015). Leurs repurposes Pierre Bourdieu’s understanding of the habitus to explain how new media works:

“Online platforms can be considered as social structures where communities of practice engage in digital practices that cultivate habituated dispositions. The user is both the creator and product of their habitus, and micro-politics resides in the individual, subjective strategies of meaning making that may challenge or reproduce organizational principles” (Leurs, 2015: 21).
In his study, Leurs consider digital identifications as processes with micro-political potential. According to him, most young people are not engaged by the “macropolitics” of political parties, which are seen to be dominated by older generations and outdated cultural modes, but by the “micropolities” of everyday life (Leurs, 2015: 21).

At this point, we can relate identification as a micro-political act which is thus an expression of being or feeling the same as someone, something or a community (Leurs, 2015: 27). Identifications performed on the new digital media platforms are a result of micro-political action, which enables users to “articulate identity alignments within, across or against axes of ethnicity, class, gender and religions” (Leurs, 2015: 27).

Therefore, these digital identifications are a “way of doing things”. By composing a nickname, posting a status update or making a profile photo people perform actions that bring into being race, gender and religious identities (Leurs, 2015: 32).

Furthermore, the social networks have become an ideal platform for social comparison. According to Gerson, Plagnol and Corr (2016), social comparison is the process by which “individuals compare themselves to others in order to obtain an external guideline against which to assess their opinions, skills, abilities and emotions” (Gerson, Plagnol and Corr, 2016: 814). In this case, the social comparison is possible because the specifications of social media; being the social networks like Facebook or Instagram a cyberspace where it is possible to find user communities with similar interests, an individual can believe another share similar opinions and abilities to their own (Gerson, Plagnol and Corr, 2016: 814). In other words, an individual can perform their identity not only showing their characteristics, but also confronting them to other individual’s behaviours and identity.

After considering the social media paradigms, it is imperative to take into account the new Selfie phenomenon. A Selfie, or a self-generated digital photographic portraiture (Senft, 2015: 1590) is one of the ways in which identifications are performed in the social media.

There are many diverse definitions of the Selfie phenomenon, like the one that gives Soerjoatmodjo:

“A selfie is a self-generated, self-selected documentation to communicate transitory message about oneself at a particular moment in time taken with the use of smartphones and/or webcams, for the purpose of immediate distribution to others via social media networks”. (Soerjoatmodjo 2016: 142)
In a different sense, according to Rabadán a Selfie is a socio-technical, creative, playful and auto-reflexive practice which invites us to re-think about the conformation of new identities and subjectivities which subjects live day by day (Rabadán 2016). In conclusion, a Selfie could be defined as a self-reference by which individuals perform their identity in the new social media networks.

Besides these definitions, it is essential to take into consideration the implications of the Selfie phenomenon. As we have already seen, a Selfie is indeed a photograph which demonstrates the digital self of an individual when it is shared on social media. Apart from that definition, as Eagar and Dann (2016) show, a Selfie can also be considered as a method for expressing individual identity, which means that the individuals use the telling of self to themselves and others through narratives (Eagar and Dann, 2016: 1837).

In this sense, it is necessary to notice that each Selfie which is posted on social media has its own narrative, where individuals adopt diverse collectively patterns to tell a narrative of self (Eagar and Dann, 2016: 1837). Therefore, when a user uploads a Selfie on the social networks, the audience is able to perceive and convey the meaning of the different narratives that are present within the Selfie.

Nevertheless, a Selfie should not be read as a simple photograph, but as a whole content which holds “tempo, rhythm and periods of storytelling” (Eagar and Dann, 2016: 1838). In this sense, as the authors present, a Selfie can be considered a single part within an “ongoing virtual narration” (Eagar and Dann, 2016: 1838). Furthermore, it is necessary to take into account that a Selfie is never an isolated element, but a part of a more extended narrative that overcomes the virtual space. For instance, a Selfie would “preclude other activities”, as Eagar and Dann demonstrate: there are many users that, before or after doing an activity, upload a Selfie to show other users their daily life. In this sense, a Selfie “depicts the individual in space and place”, as a different manner of speaking (Eagar and Dann, 2016: 1838).

After seen the implications of the Selfie phenomenon, we have to comprehend the singularities of the self-representation process and the digital identity constitution. Digital communication is no longer something that we can put aside in a certain moment to talk face-to-face to someone. On the contrary, the digital world is nowadays one aspect of our everyday life, which literally means that we just cannot run from the online reality anymore. The smartphones, which have become an authentic companion, are not only a fashionable accessory, but an essential connection to the virtual sphere.
To better understand how the digital identity works, it is necessary to firstly comprehend the classical principles of the individual self-presentation in the daily life. Goffman (1959) theorizes about this topic and shows the particularities of a subject’s identity when it meets other people.

According to Goffman, when an individual arrives to the presence of other people, they try to gain information about her. They are interested in her socioeconomic status, her self-concept, the attitude that she performs with them, her ethics, etc. Although this information seems to be searched in purpose, there are also practical reasons for achieving it. The information about an individual helps people around her to know what she expects from them and what they can expect from her as well. Therefore, people will know how to behave to obtain a particular response from her (Goffman, 1959: 13).

This process has actually several implications, which Goffman explains though a sort of comparison with a play on a theatre. For instance, he calls the “action” to the activity of an individual which takes place when she is in the presence of a particular group of observers. At the same time, the “front” is the part of the action which works regularly with the purpose of defining the situation with respect to the observers (Goffman, 1959: 30).

The front, in conclusion, is defined by the expressive resources which are used consciously or unconsciously by the individual during her action. Inside the front we can also observe the “setting”, which includes the furniture, the set, the equipment and other scenic elements, which provide the scene for the human action. For instance, the setting would be a living room including the people which are in there. In addition, the personal front is formed by the individual’s elements, like sex, age, dress, ethnicity, appearance, language, facial expressions and other characteristics (Goffman, 1959: 34).

Assuming that this theory concerns the face-to-face reality of 1959, we can now consider how this actual state of things has changed not only in the past 40 years but also with the irruption of the new communication technologies.

Cover (2015) summarizes the impact of the new technologies in one sentence:
“We do not put those devices aside and, even when we do, our conversations, relationships, and our everyday <<being>> are still strongly influenced by the communications and media access we experience” (Cover, 2015: 9).

Back in the 1990s and 2000s, as Cover explains, in the early ages of the Internet and the Web 1.0, online identity could be understood as somewhat fake or unreal separated from our real and embodied ourselves. On the contrary, today we can consider that identity is always online (Cover, 2015: 11). That is because even when a user is not connected with a digital device, he or she leaves traces of himself or herself on social networks, which are contributing to “elements of our identity” (Cover, 2015: 10).

Assuming that identity is not fixed but a process, the “trajectory of identity” is both helped along and disrupted by the presence of identity information in both traditional and digital media (Cover, 2015: 12). According to Cover, identity is comprised of identifications with particular categories or “coordinates” of identity that are given in language, media and culture. These coordinates may include identity denotations categories like gender, ethnicity, sexuality, nationality, citizenship, socioeconomic status, etc., which make up the figure of the subject. As Cover explains, the individuals are invited to identify both actively and passively with these categories. At the same time, these categories are given in media and digital media, which played out through individual’s practices in relation to communication and digital participation (Cover, 2015: 11).

In other words, the individual’s elements (the naming given by Goffman) or categories (like Cover says) are actually performed and also clearly observed in the new social media. While in the 1970s the digital media paradigm was not conceived yet, today it is imperative to take into account the multiple implications of online identity. After all, the digital fingerprinting, or the information we spread all over the Internet, allows us to recollect data about each characteristic of an individual.
4. DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 Overall approach and rationale

To answer the above research questions, this study is going to perform a virtual ethnography. This technique allows the cultural analysis of social media and online community data and, at the same time, provides a detailed representation of the lived online experience of cultural members (Kozinets, 2014: 263).

Even though virtual ethnography is placed in a scenario very closed to ethnography and, in fact, is a technique which modernize and integrates in the new technology paradigms the principles of ethnography, both methodologies are slightly different.

According to Kozinets (2014:263), virtual ethnography requires a new set of skills due to the distinct nature of computer-mediated communications. To summarize, the unique characteristics that distinguish virtual ethnography from traditional ethnography is the adaptation of the procedures to the new social media context.

The new social media platforms, where the user can comfortably share their photographs, comments and stories, are now a subject to considerate. In this context, is important to mention blogs, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and other forms of social media communication like private chats. As Kozinets explains, these platforms are very complex: while they can happen both privately and publicly, they can also be “asynchronously and synchronously” and be in different formats (like text, audio or video) (Kozinets 2014:264). In this context, virtual ethnography is the key to understand the social media phenomenon.

According to Coleman (2010), virtual ethnography can be divided into three different categories. The first one investigates the relationship between the new digital media and the cultural politics of media, examining how cultural identities, representations and imaginaries (for instance, those related to youth, nation, diaspora, ethnicity, etc.) are “remade, communicated and circulated” through individual and collective engagement with digital communication technologies (Coleman, 2010: 12). The second category examines the vernacular cultures of digital media which are manifested by different phenomena and digital groups such as hackers, bloggers or Internet memes whose logic is organized around the real state of digital media. Finally, the third category is related to the “prosaics” of
digital media, which examines how digital technologies frame other kinds of social practices like economy or politics (Coleman, 2010: 12). In the case of this study, it must fit on the first category regarding its aim to investigate the imaginary of a diasporic community.

To better understand the difference between a regular ethnography and a virtual ethnography it is necessary to consider the postulates by Lenihan (2016). According to her, while traditional ethnography tries to describe and analyse a culture, the virtual ethnography takes the same principles and applies them to online cultures (Lenihan, 2016: 23) which use several methods, such as observation, questionnaires, interviews and conversation analysis to investigate how meaning is built in digital spaces. In summary, the main idea of virtual ethnography is very close to the traditional ethnography, which is to get involved in a particular sociocultural situation to comprehend the reality. In fact, this reality is going to crash with the particular first researcher’s questions or assumptions and her approach to the community. The methodology which the researcher is going to use is, indeed, “driven by the context and data” (Lenihan, 2016: 24).

At this point, it is necessary to define two key terms to comprehend the actual implications of virtual ethnography. First of all, virtual ethnography is a “computer-mediated communication approach”, which means that communication occurs via computers and it can include text and audiovisual communication both synchronously and asynchronously depending on the digital context (Lenihan, 2016: 31). Secondly, it is imperative to define the virtual field, which is a significant difference between the traditional ethnography and the virtual ethnography: while traditional ethnography is grounded in a physical bounded site of research, virtual ethnography is grounded in a particular bounded website or digital space which the ethnographer must delineate as a part of her research process (Lenihan, 2016: 31). These boundaries, which will depend on the research in each case, can be delimited depending on the time-period, areas of interest, access to material, etc.

Furthermore, it is necessary to take into account the commonalities and the dissimilarities between virtual ethnography and other approaches, such as the website content analysis. While both methodologies use qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate digital spaces and discourses, what differentiates the virtual ethnography is the implication of the “participants' perspective” (Lenihan, 2016: 24). This means that, in the case of the virtual
ethnography, the researcher is able to discuss or describe the experiences in which she is involved.

Assuming that virtual ethnography is an approach which mixes different methods and can involve diverse methodologies we can, therefore, consider that each methodological approach will be different because of its context, the methods employed, analysis and outcomes (Lenihan, 2016: 30). Nevertheless, even if virtual ethnography always varies depending on several implications, there are indeed three guiding aspects which are essential for conducting a virtual ethnography: the field, the field notes and the ethnographer.

First of all, about the field, virtual ethnographers perform a totally different arrival, which also signify a distinct access negotiation and several implications about the observation of online interactions as well as the communication with internet users (Lenihan, 2016: 31). Therefore, the field is going to vary depending on the research decisions made related to the digital sphere, such as the search engine which is going to be used. Secondly, it is necessary to take into account the importance of the fieldwork diary, which is the instrument for working on the main aspects of the research field and the individuals which are involved. This process starts at the very beginning, when the researcher just enters to the online group or, in the case of this study, when I will start to search Selfies of the selected population on the social networks. Finally, it is necessary to consider the impact of the virtual ethnographer on the field that, as it also occurs with the traditional ethnography, which is one of the main characteristics of this particular approach.

Presuming that virtual ethnography can be used in association with other methods, it is quite interesting to consider the analysis which Lenihan proposes, the linguistic landscape analysis (Lenihan, 2016: 40). According to Lenihan, this methodology is used to study multilingualism in the public space (in this case, on the social media) which presents an account of the visual presence of particular languages in a certain domain. The technique, as Lenihan explains, involves recording visual multilingualism by counting the presence and frequency of languages in public signs (Lenihan, 2016: 41). This approach is quite valuable, because it aims to investigate the visibility of particular languages that would reflect their position in the sociolinguistic hierarchy. Depending on the context, a remarkable visibility of a language would imply its supremacy or, on the contrary, its residual value in a particular socioeconomic space. In the case of this study, it is imperative to take into
account the presence of the non-official languages (in terms of the official Spanish and Catalan legislations) used by Senegalese and Gambian communities on social media. By doing so, the study would eventually result in several conclusions about the usage and importance of the particular diaspora community’s languages.

4.2 The implications of using a virtual ethnography

The virtual ethnography approach has several implications when applied due to its singularities. First of all, while other methodologies aim to develop “depersonalized” and “standardized” research methods of data collection, ethnography is based on the involvement of the researcher (Hine, 2015: 15). When we talk about involvement, we mean that the researcher has to enlarge a proper engagement within the community and culture, as well as to familiarize with the field. At the same time, the researcher must try to comprehend life from the point of view of the community and, therefore, understand the sense of everything as the population do (Hine, 2015: 15).

According to Hine, the main idea of the ethnography approach is that it allows a direct, embodied experience of the field. In other words, the most valuable perspective of this methodology is that it stands for the presence of the researcher in the field, the idea of “being there” (Hine: 19). At this point, we would consider whether is possible for a researcher to “be there” in a digital environment, since the cyberspace does not have actual boundaries or physical field where the community would interact. To settle this apparent incongruity, Hine proposes a specific approach to better engage the digital reality: instead of focusing an ethnographic methodology on a specific place, the researcher should follow the “connections between the individuals” (Hine, 2015: 24).

Assuming that the main objective of ethnography is to share the everyday life with a particular community to better understand their reality, it is necessary to consider how far the researcher’s knowledge would go. In other words, it is imperative to discuss whether the perspective of the virtual ethnography is going to be holistic or not.

As Hine explains, the traditional aspiration to holistic purposes on ethnographic studies has changed over time. The fact that ethnography offers a comprehensive statement of a particular local community, as Hine exposes, is an acknowledged idea which presumes that
a local culture can be full-length understood as a part of a bigger sociocultural, political and economic space. In other words, this approach suggests that once a researcher has met a local community, she can already comprehend the whole society. This idea, discusses Hine, fails at figure out the possibilities of the researcher: everything that overflows the particular local community which the researcher is studying remains out of her range and cannot be knowable through ethnographic approaches (Hine, 2015: 24).

Instead, new perspectives propose that researchers should accept that a particular culture cannot be fully comprehensive. Nevertheless, wider systems are actually present on a local scale in the case of a particular community, which means that they can be efficiently studied as such though ethnographic methodologies (Hine, 2015: 24). In other words, a researcher is able to study a small community with a singular culture while she considers her conclusions as manifestations of larger phenomena.

These current views about the ethnographic holism are at the same time based on the idea that the researcher should focus on contextualization and embedding, rather than to aspire to comprehend the whole reality. In the same vein, Hine suggests that a researcher should not select in advance the aspects which she will record but to remain open to the information she will receive. Specifically, Hine recommends not implementing pre-determined interview schedule or survey questionnaire due to its restrictions in terms of the lack of improvisation. Doing so, the researcher can notice interconnections and other aspects of the culture instead of keep her eye on the expected outcomes. Hine explains the reason why it is important with a straightforward example:

“For an ethnographer, a study of food within a particular population would not start and end with looking at what people ate. Rather, an ethnography focused upon food would remain open to being surprised at what food meant to the people in question, and would be interested in any aspect of their living arrangements, their routines and rituals, their relationships, and their identities that influenced or was influenced by their practices around food and the meaning invested in them”. (Hine, 2015: 25)

In other words, a researcher must not forget what is essential: to comprehend the everyday life of a particular community and, above all, understand the meaning of their performances, beliefs and identifications.
Ethnography, therefore, is an adaptive method since it allows studying an event with the prospect that other unanticipated aspects will become relevant. For this reason, as Hine explains, the research instruments, the research questions and even the field cannot be anticipated or fully defined at the outset (Hine, 2015: 25). On the contrary, the researcher builds up the methodology while she increases her knowledge about the community and the field. In fact, ethnographers often began with an identified focus but remained open to new discoveries, relevant connections and boundaries (Hine, 2015: 25).

After considering the implications which Hine elaborates, we can describe a few basic ideas which have to be taken into account before starting a virtual ethnography. In the case of this study, it is important not to pretend to acknowledge the whole meaning of the diasporic community’s identity on the Internet. On the contrary, the study will verse on the representations of the population in a specific field and will depend on the early discoveries while collecting the data. By doing so, the improvement of my understanding of the diasporic community will make possible to focus on different aspects. At the end, the aim of the study is to comprehend the self-representation of the Senegalese and Gambian diasporic communities on the principal social networks, which will be at the same time an improvement of the knowledge of this particular community.

4.3 Population and sampling

4.3.1 Population

This study will consider the diasporic community formed by the children of Senegalese and Gambian immigrants who were born in Catalonia, also known in certain studies as the ‘second generation’ of immigrants. Senegalese and Gambian communities occupy the second and the third place in the immigration ranking in Catalonia according to IDESCAT.

At this moment, there are 14,812 Gambians and 18,893 Senegalese living in Catalonia. Furthermore, according to IDESCAT, in 2007 there were 604,071 daughters of immigrants in Catalonia (there were 1,214,337 immigrants’ children in total). It is very significant that in 2007 the amount of children from immigrants between 4 and 15 years was 476,005, the largest age group.
According to Gualda and Schramkowski (2007), is considered a second generation of immigrants those people who has a familiar origin in a different country from which they are living. In other words, their parents or other ascendants are immigrants.

This second generation condition is crucial in terms of social inclusion conditions because of diverse factors. First of all, they are exposed to the persistent racial discrimination, to the inequality in job searching and to the consolidation of ghettos in specific suburbs of the cities (Portes, Fernández Kelly and Haller, 2006).

According to Alarcón (2010), one of the most concerning issues that second generation immigrants could face nowadays are the persistence of the racism, the xenophobia and the work polarization, which result in an oppositional culture.

There are several investigations that refuse the term of second generation because of this ethnocentric and stigmatizing character. According to Pávez (2007), the reason of this ethnocentric sense is the point of view, because it takes the reception country as the main perspective. At the same time, according to Torradella and Tejero (2005) the term second generation immigrant has superficial connotations which involve discriminating attributes. For avoiding an ethnocentric point of view, Casas (2003) recommends the use of immigrants’ children and the suppression of the term second generation immigrants.

The existence of this and other diaspora communities in Catalonia has attracted the interest of a number of researchers. For instance, the study conducted by Alarcón (2010) is based in the idea of attending the special necessities of those collectives. At the same time, it has the aim of recognizing the new identities construction, which are multiple and pragmatic according to this study.

4.3.2 Senegalese and Gambian immigrants in Catalonia

To better understand the Senegalese and Gambian diasporic communities it is necessary to comprehend the origins of these migration flows to Catalonia and how these collectives have developed their lives within these new European boundaries.
In the middle of the 1980’s, the devaluation of the peanut cultivation provoked a serious recession in Senegal. This economical crisis, at the same time, stimulated Senegalese migrant fluxes to Europe, especially to Turkey, Greece, Portugal and Spain (Sow, 2007: 203).

Spain and, in particular, Catalonia, were the principal locations which received immigrants from Gambia and Fuladu, a central region of the southeastern Senegal. It is necessary to point out that this particular migration flows depend not on the nationalities but on the ethnicities; in particular, as Sow demonstrates, the principal ethnicities which emigrate to Spain in the late 1980’s were the soninkes, the mandings and the wolofs (Sow, 2007: 204). In these early years, the majority of the immigrants put their efforts on working as peddlers in several Spanish beaches (Málaga, Sevilla, Almería, Valencia, Gandesa, Castellón, Gandía, etc).

After the strengthening of the immigration policies in Europe in the decade of the 1970’s (especially in countries like France and the United Kingdom), Catalonia represented the last stage on the path to the continent for many Gambian and Senegalese due to its laxity on immigration laws (Sow, 2007: 205). In the decade of the 1980’s, the principal localities which received African immigration were el Maresme, la Selva and l’Empordà.

Senegalese and Gambian communities are one of the eldest migration societies in Catalonia and, nowadays, their cultural community is in part visible thanks to their organizations, associations and social media (Sow, 2007: 206). To better understand the origins of the Senegalese and Gambian immigrants in Catalonia, Sow defines diverse typologies depending on the ethnic groups (Sow, 2007: 206):

- The wòlof, lawbë and séréer come from the regions of Dakar, Kaolack, Diourbel, Louga and Saint-Louis.
- The haalpulaaren and soninke come from the valley of the Senegal river, the Matam and the Koda regions.
- The mandings and dioles come from the regions of Ziguinchor, Tambacounda and Kolda.
Nevertheless, it is necessary to understand that the principal ethnic groups that live in Catalonia are the wòlofs, the soninkes, the tukulors and the dioles, who have moved from different African countries before their arrival to Catalonia.

The major number of Senegalese and Gambian individuals live in the province of Barcelona, especially in the Vallès Oriental, Vallès Occidental, el Maresme and el Barcelonès. The province of Girona is also the hometown of many Senegalese and Gambian people, especially in el Gironès, el Pla de l’Estany, l’Alt Empordà and el Baix Empordà. In Barcelona, the majority of these groups work in diverse sectors, such as the horticulture, the hotel industry, self-employed activities (restaurants, bars, call boxes, etc.) or ambulant sales in the big cities. In Girona, Senegalese and Gambian communities work in hotel industry, cleaning services, gardening and horticulture (Sow, 2007: 208). It is imperative to take into account that the information provided by Sow was published on 2007, which means that this reality would have changed in the last 10 years. Nevertheless, Sow’s work is the most recent study published about the geographic characteristics of the Senegalese and Gambian diaspora communities in Catalonia.

Apart from the job sectors, it is also necessary to notice that the men are the providers for the family in these particular groups. Only a few women actually work, even if most of them develop domestic tasks (Sow, 2007: 208).

As a conclusion, we can argue that the Senegalese and Gambian migrants have been significant communities in Catalonia since the decade of 1980. As we have already seen, this study aims to comprehend how the children of these first emigrants have developed their identity in Catalonia, which is their actual hometown and is, indeed, a location where their parents have been living for several years.

**4.4 Sampling strategies**

The Snowball sampling is the strategy which I will develop in this study due to its characteristics. According to Browne (2005), the snowball sampling is a method that applies research into the participant’s social networks to access specific populations. In this case, this strategy is going to be especially useful to analyse data on platforms 2.0 such as Facebook and Instagram.
Furthermore, as Browne explains (Browne, 2005: 47), snowball sampling is often used because the population under investigation is hidden either due to low numbers of potential participants or the sensitivity of the topic. In this case, our sample is likely to be out of view because of its particularities. The best way to have access to Gambian and Senegalese diasporic communities such the ones we have already explained is using participants’ social networks.

In her study, Browne also shows the main advantages and disadvantages of this kind of method:

“Social networks, as channels for recruitment, can be an advantage in some respects (for example, including those often ignored in studies that rely on random or representative sampling) yet a disadvantage in others (for example, excluding those not within friendship groups).” (Browne, 2005: 48).

Although the snowball sampling method would discard some individuals, is probably the best method to access a particular sensitive group on social media.

The reason why the snowball sampling can be quite effective in sensitive cases is that the connections are made “contacting one participant via the other”, which create a series of referrals within a circle of people who know each other (Browne, 2005: 50). A good start point would be to use personal networks and ask friends and colleagues to get involved who, at the same time, would ask other friends to participate. This particular method, according to Browne (2005: 50), avoids the issues associated with the categorization of groups, because it is not necessary to search a specific group but a number of individuals who have connections with each other. In this case, using my personal networks to better engage the population will be beneficial for various reasons. First of all, it will allow me to have access to individuals who may be hidden and who probably would not answer to advertisements or emails from strangers. Secondly, the fact that I will be using my personal social networks will permit the individuals to check out my profile (Browne, 2005: 51).

Collecting data through my own social networks will allow me, indeed, to have trustworthy relationship with the community. As Browne clarifies, this method will permit that the individuals ask me questions privately about the research and, at the same time, I will be able to explain how their private information would be used.
4.5 Data collection methods

According to Kozinets (2014:265), the data collection method in a virtual ethnography technique must comprise those communities (in this case, those individuals which identify with the Gambian and Senegalese Diaspora communities and also have a social media network account) that are more relevant according to the research questions, that have a higher traffic of postings and have a more detailed or descriptively rich data.

After doing this previous research, it is also imperative to have a deepening cultural understanding of the community. In this sense, before starting the data collection process, it is necessary to observe and embrace the main rituals and social structures of this particular community on the Internet. Only when this background research is complete the active participation can actually begin. According to Kozinets (2014), the active participation in virtual ethnography allows researchers to experience what it feels to be a community member. In other words, it provides the opportunity to comprehend the subject in an inner approach.

To design the data collection methods we could focus on the three general virtual ethnography types of data suggested by Kozinets (2014: 270):

- **Archival data:** It comprises anything the researcher can gather from the sources (in this case, the social networks) that is a product of the sample. The first step in the research should be to collect those types of data to have a better understanding of the cultural context and to have a first meet with the community. This archival data could comprehend text, image or video format, which could be recorded, copied or captured during the analysis. For instance, the data collection should focus on the pictures which individuals use to represent themselves and the way they describe themselves.

- **Elicited data:** It refers to content which proceeds from online interviewing, whether by email, online chat or video calling. In this context, it is necessary to notice the specific characteristics of the online interaction. Although the non-verbal information could be lost, online interviews are the properly approach for communicating with the community.
- Field note data: It relates to the data generated by myself for documenting the journey. My impressions and experiences about the interaction and analysis of the data may introduce some useful context and interpretation of the study.

In this study I will consider the self-generated photographs (or selfies) which the specific population uploads in both Facebook and Instagram. I will analyse, at the same time, the text they share when uploading a Selfie. It is imperative to take into consideration both the images and the text because of its interconnections: the text always gives the context for the image and, furthermore, in the case of Selfies, it could reflect the feelings or thoughts of the individuals while sharing a Selfie.

According to Kozinets (2010) the main idea of the data collection process in a virtual ethnography approach is the communication with the members of the community. It is imperative to think that, even if the interactions will take place through the computer or mobile devices, I am going to communicate with actual people and, therefore, it is necessary to think about which strategies are going to work better.

The first step for initiating a data collection process is to deliberate how is going to be the data capture procedure. There are two basic methods: to save the file as a computer-readable file, or as a visual image of the screen (Kozinets, 2010: 92). In the case of this study, assuming that we are going to consider both images and text, it will be positive to save texts in a computer-readable field and to do screenshots for the Selfies.

Once the data capturing method is selected, it is necessary to design the strategies for the eliciting of virtual ethnography data. As Kozinets shows (2010), there are two basic ways to do so: the communal interaction and the interview, which could be mixed to produce engagement with the community members. In the case of the interviews, we are going to discuss this method in the following pages. About the communal interaction, is interesting to mention the method which develops Kozinets to improve the engagement with the online community of Star Trek fans (Kozinets, 2010: 99). Kozinets provides an extensive blog about Star Trek and its fan community and a social networking site for contacting them. In this blog Kozinets explains the nature of the research which he is developing, adding participant’s opinions and frequent asked questions for other members of the community who want to participate in the project.
This strategy would be, indeed, quite useful in the case of my study. Designing a blog about Senegalese and Gambian diaspora in Catalonia could be a perfect method to show the nature of my research and, at the same time, to solve some logic doubts about how I am going to conduct it. The individuals would consult my blog and, therefore, the engagement with the community would improve. Although a blog could consume a lot of time (it will be necessary to design a good quality platform, planning and writing good content and sharing it on the social media) its benefits could provide excellent outcomes for the study.

4.5.1 Participant Observation

Participant observation is one of the most useful ethnographic methods to comprehend the reality of a community, even if these procedures are conducted in a virtual space. Participant observation allows the researcher to step into the social frame where the activity is taking place and, according to Boellstorff, this method is the embodied emplacement of the researching self as a consequential social actor (Boellstorff, 2012: 50). Specifically, Boellstorff defines the implications of this “embodiment” of the researcher as it follows:

“Embodied participant observation work (even when in avatar form) is shaped by the many aspects of our subject position, which may include gender, age, race, social class, accent, national origin, sexual orientation, language skills, religion, occupation, and political commitments.” (Boellstorff, 2012: 54)

At this point, we can argue how these aspects could actually change the researcher impressions because of a biased point of view. In fact, we can argue the same statement about any journalistic work, since it is always made by a subject and, therefore, the results have to have certain subjectivity at some point. In a way, the ethnographer have to face the same circumstances; to overcome this situation, the researcher have to mediate with its own subjectivity and try to observe the community’s behaviour avoiding prejudices and previous acknowledgements.

Once the researcher have taken the first contact with the community, she will be able to obtain some practical and specialized knowledge (like language skills or familiarity with a religious tradition), and how to behave appropriately within a culture (Boellstorff, 2012: 55). At the same time, participant observation allows the researcher to understand how the typical behaviours are displayed in the virtual world. Although these discoveries would provide important information, it is necessary to notice that is impossible to be aware of the
behaviours that arise out of the everyday experiences of interacting in a virtual world (Boellstorff, 2012: 55).

Another aspect which has to be taken into account is the way in which the researcher is going to manage the technological issues. Assuming that the field is going to be in a virtual context, it is imperative to prepare all the materials which have to be used. Apart from the computer and other mobile devices, it is necessary to prepare the “one’s ethnographic self”, which means that the researcher have to confident with the everyday life of the virtual word (Boellstorff, 2012: 57). In the case of this study, I will develop the blog platform where I am going to expose the aim of my research (as we have already seen in the previous section) as well as to improve the presence of my personal social networks.

I will manage the information and data which I will collect through the participant observation during the earliest stages for better managing and analysing processes. To do so, as Boesllstorff recommends, I will place the field notes in a database. This database will allow me to look for patterns and types of activity as well as to classify the entire individual's information.

4.5.2 Interviews

Apart from the participant observation, the interviews are one of the most used methods in the ethnography approach. In fact, virtual interviews are very similar to the face-to-face interviews and, indeed, have the same typologies: group-based or individual, formal or informal, structured or unstructured (Kozinets, 2010: 102).

In the case of our study, the interviews should be semistrucured, individual and informal. Specifically, the semistructured typology would fit perfectly in this research because of its characteristics. While a structured interview is a very rigid variety of interview, the semistructured is a quite fair mix of preparation and flexibility (Boellstorff, 2012: 71) that allows the researcher to improve her engagement with the individuals.

According to Boellstorff, the members of a particular community are not always completely conscious of their culture, but they are indeed very good commentators about many aspects of their culture (Boellstorff, 2012: 71). Therefore, though semistructured interviews the researcher can learn about the inner stories of a particular culture, the unofficial customs
and conventions. To accomplish this purpose, with the semistructured interview, the researcher encourages the individuals to examine the particular topics of interest as they arise in the conversation (Boellstorff, 2012: 71).

This kind of interview, where the interviewer asks questions such as “what else?” and “can you tell me more about this?”, slows down the conversation and allows pauses in which the individuals can deliberate their answers and add further thoughts (Boellstorff, 2012: 71). When the interviews are performed online, the procedures are very similar to the face-to-face interviews. As Kozinets explains, virtual interviews have a well-defined structure:

“[Online interviews] involve formally approaching a participant, suggesting an interview, and conducting a conversation from the frame of an interview, where the researcher’s role is primarily that of the asker of questions”. (Kozinets, 2010: 102).

According to Kozinets (2010) it is needed to conduct virtual interviews in a very similar way than a regular interview. For instance, the quality of the participant’s response will depend on the accuracy of the questions and the patience of the researcher for delving into the important topics. While doing so, the researcher is building rapport and hoping for genuine disclosure (Kozinets, 2010: 102).

The virtual interview should begin with general questions that help to place the participant in a specific environment and, later, focus the questions in a more specific perspective. As Kozinets shows, this approach to interviewing requires a considerable amount of time, as well as a “clearly-wordered questions” (Kozinets, 2010: 100).

A correct preparation of the interview will produce a profitable feedback. Furthermore, it is important to respect the value system of the community and avoid inappropriate questions (Kozinets, 2010: 100). As a researcher, I am going to consider how to ask sensitive questions about themselves not only to better achieve my goals, but to keep the trust of the participants and not to bother them. After accomplish my objective of creating an atmosphere of trust, I will focus on obtaining valuable information for the study.

4.6 Data analysis and interpretation procedures

After the collecting data processes, it is imperative to design and implement correct data analysis and interpretation procedures. According to Kozinets, the analysis of qualitative
data requires an inductive approach, which involves a detailed examination of a whole by “breaking it into its constituted parts and comparing them in different ways” (Kozinets, 2010: 108). In this sense, the data analysis process turns the collected data of the virtual participant observation and interviews into a finished research representation which contributes to the knowledge of the studied subject. Specifically, the inductive approach which proposes Kozinets is a way to manage the recorded information and built it up in order to make general report about a phenomenon (Kozinets, 2010: 108).

According to Kozinets, there are several qualitative data analytic processes that must be adapted to the specific research. The principal methods for analytic procedures are (Kozinets, 2010: 109):

- **Coding**: this is one of the main analytic methods, which consists in attaching codes or categories to data drawn from field notes, interviews and texts and photographs on social media. During coding, codes are assigned to particular units of data, which label the data as belonging to a general phenomenon. The categories used in coding usually do not appear by imposed categories, but appear through a close observation of the data.

- **Noting**: in this process, the researcher notes some reflections or remarks in the margins of the data. In other words, is a form of annotation also known as “memoing”.

- **Abstracting and comparing**: this method allows the researcher to classify the data to identify similar phrases, shared sequences, relationships and diverse differences. This process builds the categorized codes into more general conceptual patterns to better compare the similarities and differences across data incidents.

- **Checking and refinement**: is the process of returning to the field in order to get more data. This second data collection will allow the researcher to isolate, check and refine the understanding of the patterns, processes and differences.

- **Generalizing**: for explaining the consistencies in the dataset, the researcher elaborates a small set of generalizations.

- **Theorizing**: once the generalizations are made, the researcher is able to confront them with the formalized body of knowledge to construct a new theory. In other words, to develop a theory it is necessary to coordinate both the analysis of the data with the existing relevant body of knowledge.
In the case of this study, the most appropriate methods for analysing and interpreting data are a combination of coding and hermeneutics to transform the collected data into a meaningful research.

Therefore, I will label and categorize data by field-level meanings and raise these codes up to tentative conceptual categories. This process means giving these categories conceptual definitions and assessing relationships between them (Thornberg, 2014). To generate and refine categories, I will make many constant comparisons like, for instance, comparing interaction patterns, comparing data from the similar phenomenon in different situations and contexts, comparing different people and comparing data from the same individuals at different points of time (Thornberg, 2014: 159).

In the hermeneutical approach the process of interpretation is no longer seen as the result of a “distanced view” of the researcher but as a dialogue, in which different perspectives meet (Wernet, 2013: 234). Although several experts agree that hermeneutics does not provide methods of interpretation in the sense of data analysis in qualitative empirical research, it could be understood as an open, “non-standardized method specializing in text interpretation” (Wernet, 2013: 244).

In fact, the aim of hermeneutics is to reveal “new dimensions of the topic” and insights that “revise the current understanding of a thesis” (Kozinets, 2010: 110). As Kozinets explains, the written style must be persuasive, engaging, interesting and must use metaphors, similes and analogies to fascinate the readers (Kozinets, 2010: 110). In addition, it is necessary to notice that a good hermeneutic interpretation will investigate the social and historical contexts of the data, providing a fair cultural interpretation.

Other perspectives on data analysis suggest that it is needed to “systematize” and “thematize” the collected data in order to bring thoughtful and productive ideas (Boellstorff, 2012: 114). According to Boellstorff, the first step to analyse the qualitative data is to systematize it, an approach which will reveal patterns that can lead to larger insights when combined with other concepts. Thence, the researcher systematize the material by labelling data with micro-units such as “gender” or “conflict” and move it to coding (Boellstorff, 2012: 114).
At this point, it is necessary to comprehend the difference between “tagging”, the process which explains Boellstorff, and the “coding” process which proposes Kozinets. While coding usually refers to a systematic categorizing of data with higher-level constructs such as “the relationship between temporality and romance”, tagging concerns simpler ideas and is the first step before coding (Boellstorff, 2012: 117).

After the systematization process, the second level of analysis in the thematization procedure. In this stage, the researcher explores the data to find patterns and critical moments regarding the specific culture in a significant way (Boellstorff, 2012: 118). These patterns may be found in diverse locations, like the virtual field while performing participant observation or for instance noticing reiterative ideas in the interviewing process. Actually, the first step of systematizing will help me in finding recurrences and interesting thoughts which will be developed. Furthermore, the previous literature to conceptualize the topic will be quite valuable for thematizing my study.

In short, the goal of the thematization process is to organize the data into manageable pieces that can be thematically analysed and easily locate when writing the research results (Boellstorff, 2012: 119). To do so, it is important to take into account that many categories will be too large for analysing them; to solve it, I will split them up into diverse topics in order to study the data in a more manageable way. In conclusion, the aim of systematization and thematization is to combine them for gaining a better understanding of the collected data and transform the results into valuable statements.

4.6.1 Participant observation and interview data analysis

Assuming that participant observation is one of the most important data collection methods, the field notes will be decisive in the analysis process. As Boellstorff exposes, the virtual field notes must include not only the major incidents but a range of ordinary interactions and episodes (Boellstorff, 2012: 119). In this case, there are no differences in working with traditional or virtual participant observation, because the purpose is identical: to discover patterns that clarify the research questions and develop new insights.

According to Boellstorff (Boellstorff, 2012: 119), the first step for analysing data is to revise each note and document and search for the central topics. Once the main theme of the data is located, there are several approaches to better examine them: on the one hand, I will
observe the data at different scales, from the most tiny detail to the extended pattern of culture; on the other hand I will try to see the data through diverse prisms in order to discover the multiple sides of the information.

In the same vein, it is necessary to notice the important information within the huge amount of data which will be analysed. In other words, it is imperative to distinguish which information challenges some arguments which are being developed. At the same time, the researcher should not dismiss data which do not fit the argument she is trying to elaborate. These exceptions to patterns may open a possibility of unexpected discoveries that would be an opportunity to go deeply in the analysis (Boellstorff, 2012: 120).

Regarding virtual interviews, the objective is to analyse the transcriptions and look for themes and points where informants make insightful comments (Boellstorff, 2012: 121). Therefore, it is necessary to fulfil detailed tagging of small analytical units, such as the use of a particular word or concept. At the end, this data analysis from interviews will be useful to locate the essential concepts, themes and issues around which the researcher will build the virtual ethnography (Boellstorff, 2012: 121).

4.6.2 Analysing visual data

As we have already seen, this study is going to focus on the self-generated photographs which the community upload on their social media. To analyse the Selfies, it is necessary to take into account some approaches on analysing visual data. For instance, one of the most remarkable methodologies is the visual social semiotics.

According to Harrison (2003: 47), visual social semiotics is a theoretical framework for examining how images convey meaning. The difference between this approach and the other ones (such as Gestalt theory, art history, psychoanalytical image analysis and iconography) is that visual social semiotics is unique in stressing that an image is not the result of a singular and creative activity, but a social process itself. Therefore, each image has a particular meaning which is a result of a negotiation between the producer and the viewer. In this negotiation, as Harrison explains, it is reflected their individual (both the producer’s and the viewer’s) beliefs, values and attitudes. Considering this particular Harrison’s statement, we could argue that this values and attitudes would also be related
with the power relations between the individuals according to Foucault’s theory that we have already seen in the previous pages.

To better understand the term “visual social semiotics” it is necessary to comprehend each of the concepts. First of all, we can describe “semiotics” as the “study of signs”. According to Harrison, for a sign to exist there must be meaning or content (also called the signified) manifested through expression or representation (Harrison, 2003: 47).

After defining “semiotics” it is imperative to explain the terminology “social semiotics”, which is a synthesis of several modern approaches to the study of social meaning and social action. Furthermore, social semiotics includes formal semiotics and asks how people use signs to construct the life of a community (Harrison, 2003: 48). The reason why social semiotics is important is because the nature of culture: every community is different and, therefore, the signs used by one community may be different from those used by another (Harrison, 2003: 48).

Finally, visual social semiotics is a new field of study defined as:

“The description of semiotic resources, what can be said and done with images (and other visual means of communication) and how the things people say and do with images can be interpreted” (Harrison, 2003 p. 48).

Essentially, an image performs, simultaneously, three kinds of meta-semiotic tasks to create meaning: the representational metafunction, interpersonal metafunction, and compositional metafunction. To better understand these terms, Harrison explains its implications as it follows (Harrison, 2003: 48 - 58):

- The representational metafunction: it involves the people, places, and objects within an image (which Harrison calls the represented participants or RPs). This metafunction answers the question “what is the picture about?” and aims to clarify who are the represented participants in the image, what kind of action is represented, what kind of history is behind the photograph, which social and cultural concepts may be recognized and how the text and the image are complemented.
• The interpersonal metafunction: it includes the actions among all the participants involved in the production and viewing of an image (that is, the creator, the RPs, and the viewer). This metafunction answers the question “how does the picture engage the viewer?” and aims to interpret how close do the viewer feels towards the RPs, how the viewer notices the perspective of the image, how does the horizontal or vertical angle affects to the sense of involvement with the RPs, and which semiotic resources have the producer to create a concrete impression.

• The compositional metafunction: it tries to answer the question “how do the representational and interpersonal metafunctions relate to each other and integrate into a meaningful whole?” In other words, this metafunction aims to understand how the other two metafunctions enable the signs so that they make sense to the reader. Furthermore, it aims to clarify why the producer chooses one particular placement for the RPs, how does the use of colour or lack of it affect the rhetorical message of the image, and how real does the image appear to the viewer.

According to Harrison, the best approach is not to attempt to use the whole framework, but to focus on one or two metafunctions when starting to analyse images. Furthermore, it is important that the researcher does not give some information for granted when analysing the images. Instead, it is appropriate that the researcher make explicit all the elements of the image and try to explain its significance even if it may seem obvious (Harrison, 2003: 59).

In this case, I will use a visual social semiotics approach for trying to understand the meanings within the Selfies and try to relate them with identity characteristics. In this sense, I will have to identify the signs in which images are built off. Once certain elements of an image have been at least tentatively identified as its signs, their meanings can be explored (Rose, 2016: 102).

4.6.3 Narratives and arguments

While analysing all the collected data in the virtual ethnography, the researcher should consider at what point this process will be finished. According to Boellstorff (Boellstorff, 2012 p.123), the data collection and analysis procedures should end when the review of the data does not show new patterns. At this point, after the systematization of the data and the
generation of thematics, the researcher must develop narratives and arguments that bring to larger theoretical and conceptual points (Boellstorff, 2012: 123).

Therefore, the final step is crafting a narrative around the discovered themes, presenting evidence and arguments to communicate the main conclusions of the virtual ethnography. According to Boellstorff, a fair approach for detecting the principal accomplishment of the research is to consider how to summarize the key ideas. If the conclusions are clear, the researcher should be capable of review them with only a few sentences (Boellstorff, 2012: 123).

4.7 Anticipated ethical issues

Since social media blend the public and private into a new hybrid form, virtual ethnography demands new thinking and methodological innovation on issues of privacy (Kozinets, 2010).

For instance, to properly handle the data protection problems, it is important to always request legal names and signed consent forms when interviewing the subjects.

In the case of content published on social media, it is imperative to consider the ethical issues inherent in quoting directly from online sources. As Kozinets exposes:

“Although a web user is responsible for the consequences of publicly posting information on the Internet, re-publication or citation in an academic publication may have unexpected consequences for the individual and/or the community”. (Kozinets, 2014 p. 268)

To protect the user’s intimacy, Kozinets propose the “pseudonymization” (Kozinets, 2014 p. 268). If a user uses a pseudonymous identity, the researcher should always be careful to treat this particular identity as if it were a legal identity, creating further pseudonyms when an individual may need protection or strict intimacy. In addition, I should have to take into account the possible copyright laws if I have to publish a photograph from social media in my research. In that case, I will have to ask the user for permission and quote them.
4.8 Limitations

One of the main limitations of this research is the possibility to create a real theory out of the data analysis process. As we have seen in the methodology section, the chosen method is a virtual ethnography, which is a very time-consuming approach in which the researcher has to become a part of the community in a certain way to understand how they think and why they define themselves as they do. If I eventually fail in this process, the results could be inconclusive.

Another limitation is the high amount of data which I will have to manage. In fact, is almost impossible to take into account all of the texts, images and other types of data that I will find on the Internet. Although a significant amount of information will eventually be rejected, the importance of the research will depend on the quality of the data collection and its analysis.
5 MAIN CONCEPTS OF THE RESEARCH

The structure and the contents of the research will be constructed around four main concepts: the Diaspora, the social media paradigm, the Selfie phenomenon and digital identity. To better understand these ideas, we define them as it follows:

- **Diaspora**

  Diaspora is the process of self-imagination and self-awareness by which an individual become a part of a community. A diasporic community is based on a sense or feeling of belonging to a specific territory which becomes an imaginary commonplace. Therefore, the diasporic community has strong links and identifications with this commonplace or homeland, even if an eventual back home process is not possible anymore.

  The identity formation of a diasporic community is nor fix or preconceived, but a process that occurs inside the nature of the daily life and the collective quotidian stories.

- **Social Media**

  The main difference between the traditional media and the new social media paradigm (or the Web 2.0) is the interactivity. The current social media transforms the passive mass media receivers into full-fledged communicators. In this sense, the users become senders as well as receivers. Therefore, the new social media channels (such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat or Youtube) are able to offer a variety of individualized content such as images, text and videos which have the potential of creating user communities depending on their preferences.

- **Selfie phenomenon**

  A Selfie is a self-generated photography which communicates a message about oneself at a particular moment in time taken with the use of mobile devices for the purpose of immediate distribution to others in social media networks. Furthermore, the Selfie can also be considered as method for expressing individual identity, which means that the
individuals use the telling of self through different narratives. In this sense, Selfie should be read as a whole content which holds a particular storytelling and have a specific context and meaning.

- **Digital identity**

Identity is formed by diverse identifications or identity denotations, such as gender, ethnicity, sexuality, nationality, citizenship or socioeconomic status. These categories, when combined, draw the figure of the subject and can be recognized in language, media and culture.

This identity process, which is not fixed, is disrupted by the new digital media practices and become a digital identity. This digital identity can be recognized when an individual participates in the different social media practices, such as sharing texts or photographs. In this moment, the different categories of gender, ethnicity, etc. are combined and distinguished.
6. REFERENCES


Kozinets, R. V. (2010). *Netnography: Doing ethnographic research online*. Sage publications


7. CALENDAR AND SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Month</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phd research proposal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Observation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report Planning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report Writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>