So, did you know how you use it?: Understanding the Consumption in Facebook Community

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Abstract

The rapid changes in internet technology, coupled with Web 2.0 have created new and exciting ways of how we interact, socialize, and express ourselves. These new forms of socializations have been highly facilitated by Social Networking Sites (SNSs). These SNSs work as platforms for all types of information and entertainment experiences, creating a distinct culture of consumption of information and experiences—Technological-culture or Cyberculture. In this research, we attempt to understand the consumption dynamics of Technology culture, by focusing on Facebook community. Facebook community is a cultural entity where narratives, identity, stories, images, work as commodities of consumption to enrich and uplift consumers’ experiences. Like any consumption, these images, narratives and stories are also subject to individual interpretations, which make it interesting to explore the motivations, hidden meanings and interpretations behind the consumption acts like liking, commenting, sharing on Facebook. By taking Consumer Culture Theory approach and qualitative methods of interviews, e-journals and follow-up, we present that Facebook community culture consists of empowered consumers who, by their selective consumption acts, create multiple yet individual identities. These identities are created with the help of symbols, narratives, interactions and images; however the reality of these narratives relies on the extent of social bonding or friendship one has with another. Therefore, the community aspect, along with the rituals of help, reciprocity, participation in social bonding, is still very strong part of Facebook culture. Moreover, we also highlight that on Facebook community, a consumer is a producer, therefore a prosumer. Whereas, we present that in efforts to prosume, a consumer invests a lot of psychic energy, unlike any other consumption, which creates a paradox of ‘a consumer being consumed in the act of consumption’.
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1.0 Introduction

Internet technology has revolutionized the world by providing new ways of thinking, behaving and expressing ourselves and engaging with outside world, mainly through the medium of Web 2.0. This Web 2.0 is a new and interactive way of self-expression through blogs, videos, Social Networking Sites (SNSs) and so on (Papasolomou & Melanthiou, 2012). On an average, an individual devotes about 32% of his or her media consumption to online channels in 2010 as compared to 26% in 2008 (Fournier & Avery, 2011). This increased social media consumption attracts more than 100 million visitors, creating trillions of connections each day, and disseminating phenomenal amount of information at an incredible rate through platforms such as MySpace, Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, and others (Akar, & Topcu, 2011). Out of this media consumption, more than 20% of user’s time is dedicated to social media, including online communities and Social Networking Sites (SNSs), which increases the overall value of SNSs in terms of user’s attention and time (Seraj, 2012). Therefore, it is safe to say that this strong emergence of social media (or Web 2.0 in general) has not only impacted upon the technological landscape (with provision of medium for commercial and non-commercial purposes), but also on socio-cultural aspects of our everyday lives in form of online/virtual communities and SNSs. Social media, therefore truly captures the essence of widely acclaimed phrase ‘world as global village’ as it has surfaced the users from traditional cultural and national boundaries to one global platform of the internet (Louie & Venkatesh, 2013). Hence, considering technology as an important ingredient of our cultural framework, the connections between technology and culture should not be underestimated. Social media provides an interesting, amalgamated and inter-related form of what Louie and Venkatesh (2013) call as Technological Culture. As authors further describe, this Technological Culture is rooted in the main elements of persistence, association, visibility and editability (Treem & Leonardi, forthcoming; cited in Louie & Venkatesh, 2013, p.421). We elaborate on these four ingredients by starting with the definition of ‘social media’.

Social media, as simply defined by Hansen, Shneiderman and Smith (2010; cited in Louie & Venkatesh, 2013) is “a set of online tools to support social interaction between users” (p.418). Rheingold (1993, cited in Seraj, 2012) takes this definition forward to specifically define online communities and SNSs as “social aggregations that emerge from the net when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling,
to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace” (p.209). From both definitions, the interesting notions of ‘interactions’, ‘users’ ‘discussions long enough’ ‘human feelings’ and ‘personal relationships’ provide the dimensions of ‘association’ and ‘persistence’ of Technological Culture. When people on social networks interact, the result is the in form of information, which is often read and further commented upon to be reformed and the process goes on ‘long enough’, which means until that information is meaningful to readers. This significant form of information is actually turned into ‘knowledge’ when people seek help or advice, look for product reviews etc. Therefore, the knowledge gaining phenomenon involves a high level of human interaction that creates some degree of association. This argument is supported by Yang et al. (2012, cited in Bronner & Hoog, 2012) by commenting “the development of online communities has reshaped consumers’ information – seeking and sharing behaviour” (p.371). This information seeking and sharing behaviour create ample amount of information, a resource called as ‘Information Capital’ (Arvidsson & Colleoni, cited in Buzzetto-More, 2013). This information capital, just like well-known ‘economic capital’ is used for various commercial and non-commercial activities, but the categories of these platforms define the purpose for its use. For example, virtual community on brands like Louise Vuitton, Apple, or even Nuttela, might have more commercial-orientation than pages on Facebook or Twitter.

Fournier and Avery (2011) in their research claim that users do not see SNSs like Twitter and Instagram as a medium for marketing or sales, but instead, only for one-on-one conversations, connections and networks. This new form of non-commercial ‘Information Capital’ transforms users into active creators of information from passive observers. SNSs therefore are seen a medium where information is created, co-created, re-created to be interpreted, represented, misinterpreted, misrepresented and even marred to different degrees (Louie & Venkatesh, 2013). This description is strongly linked to the last two ingredients of Technology Culture that are ‘visibility’ and ‘editibility’. Kozinets (1999), highlights these two as a strong way for users to digitally present themselves by creating their personal identity through constant communications and visual self-presentational techniques. Here we see a possibility of creating a ‘different’ self through the technique of ‘editibility’ in this new culture. This can be done in several ways like posting only nice pictures on Facebook, giving only positive reviews on books to appear more positive, or vice versa. This form of Information Capital on SNSs is used for making perceptions about other’s personalities in relation to what they share. Further, Pine and Gilmore (2011, cited in Ritzer et al, 2012)
comment that we live in ‘Experience Economy’ of internet and Web 2.0, where virtual interactions between participants generate positive and negative experiences like fun, entertainment, fantasy, biases, social comparison and so on. Therefore, in Technological Culture, this information capital is used to generate certain experiences that have impact on participants of virtual community. It is important to highlight that, almost all researches that we have come across have established that these social networking platforms should not be regarded as a replacement, but rather a supplementation to physical encounters (Kozinets 1998, 1999, 2002b, cited in Schau & Gilly, 2003). Therefore, this combination of virtual and real life for maintenance of identity, associations and interactions and how others respond to it, makes it an interesting area to explore. Although SNSs consist of various platforms, for the purpose of this research, we focus particularly on Facebook due to its size, usage and multi-dimensionality in number of activities.

1.1 Facebook as a Community
Facebook is the biggest Social Networking Site (SNS) of today and has about one billion active users worldwide (The Wall Street Journal, 2012), 1280 million active monthly users and out of which over 50% log in to it every day (The Guardian, 2012). It is also the second most trafficked site after Google (Alexa 2011; cited in Lee et al 2012).

Although Facebook was started as the niche network in 2004 for Harvard-only college network, it further expanded to other countries in 2005 to distinct college and schools student-networks. Interested students were required to have a college or university email address and their account-opening application required Facebook’s administrative approval. The users initially could not disclose their profiles publically or add personal contacts, but in about 10 years, today users can add acquaintances (friends, family, colleagues etc.) and strangers, to turn them into friends, contacts, and Fans or followers (Boyd & Ellison, 2008).

The dynamic nature of Facebook lets users share photos, statuses, opinions, videos, check-in to places, show different emotions through visuals like emoticons which generate many experiences for its participants. In response to these experiences, Facebook users have the options of interacting by commenting, liking, re-sharing and so on. Further, Facebook also provides several modes of user interactions through private messages (inboxes), personal profiles or walls, even tagging others in one’s posts. Users also have the option of joining their favourite community pages or groups such as particular brand’s page, food lovers group, and health and fitness conscious community, new-mom’s community and so on. It also serves
the main purpose of official social interactions such as closed groups for meeting updates, upcoming events, parties and so on (Pempek, Yermolayeva & Calvert, 2009). The multi-dimensionality of Facebook makes it an interesting case to understand and explore in detail what information capital these virtual communities offer and how useful it is for the participants. In the next section, we shed some light upon the culture of virtual communities by quoting some researches on various online communities in order to present better premises for understanding culture in our research.

1.2 The Culture of Online Communities
Online communities, that bring users of similar interests and experiences to share their details in terms of interaction have become focus of attention of researchers from different research backgrounds like communications and media studies, human interactions, cultural anthropology, social networks, business and marketing (Louie & Venkatesh, 2013). For our research, we are interested in understanding the cultural anthropological side for Facebook, which, to our understanding has not been researched much upon. Although there are various studies on Facebook from non-anthropological sides which we quote in Literature review. However, several researchers from cultural anthropology have presented a general understanding on virtual community culture, which we believe is important to highlight to further extend our research in understanding Facebook as a specific case.

In cultural anthropological researches, it is argued that social media represents the cultural framework that brings people from cultural and national backgrounds to form a new culture on social media (Louie & Venkatesh, 2013). Two major characteristics of social media that generate a platform for culture is Web 2.0 and User Generated Content (UGC) which is a result of user interaction on different platforms. On basis of these two characteristics, social media provides a platform for ´mediated social spaces in digital world´ for interactions and communications (Seraj, 2012). This means that social media provides a place in shape of several communities of interest for individuals to participate, interact with others and build relationships, in short, to socialize. The socializing opportunities in these mediated social spaces bring in certain experiences, values, rituals and norms as Collins (2004; cited in Seraj, 2012) proposes that for values and rituals to occur, the key factors are mutual focus of attention and emotional entertainments. These emotional entertainments can be linked to our previous idea of experiences as result of information capital, gained or consumed in an online environment. Although some studies stress on the need of physical interactions for the
generation of rituals and values, Seraj (2012), after her study on an online community named ‘airliner’ (a paid-membership-based community of people interested in airlines), established that with active participation, emotional involvement and mutual interests, these rituals can be developed in an online environment as much as they are done in real life environments. Here, we can naively draw an analogy from Facebook where participant or ‘friends’ indulge in ‘greetings’, ‘liking’ to show their interest on the post, and sending ‘emoticons’ to express their feelings in response to the emotional entertainment they are consuming in a virtual community. We can also establish that since Facebook is a community of ‘friends’, there would be even high possibility for these rituals to occur in an online environment, in comparison to an online community of interest like ‘airliner’. Besides this, Seraj (2012) also presents other basis of online cultures as moral responsibility, consciousness of kind and traditions to be important part of online communities.

Seraj (2012) studied that the commitment levels of people in online networks are based on strong and weak ties to its participants on virtual communities, where strong ties are influential in maintaining interactions and keep conversations going, weak ties are used for gaining knowledge and information on subject(s) of interest that they would not always get from other sources, or even from their strong ties. Therefore, we can argue that Facebook community also provides various resources in terms of posts that users consume for their emotional experiences. Therefore, while the strong ties would help the ‘talk’ going, the weak ties would function as a source of information. Therefore, the value (in shape of experience and information) that participants gain from a community is dependent on an extent of their involvement and the type of information they are looking for. While the former (strong ties) determines the social value, the latter determines the informational value. In terms of Facebook, we can draw an analogy where strong and weak ties between participants create different sources of experiences which are consumed in different ways.

We conclude the discussion by emphasizing on the point of nature, use and importance of culture within these virtual communities. Culture is a set of values, ideas, meanings and symbols that help individuals communicate and interpret a common sense of identity and understanding towards a certain behaviour (Davis 1984, cited in Seraj, 2012). These shared ideas are part of daily practices which explain the underlying reasons, behaviours and responses from participants within a culture. As culture is formed between members of a community, the existence of an actual community as a place of communication or interaction (real or virtual) is a pre-requisite. This virtual community culture, therefore can be regarded...
as a consumer culture where the information is not only being consumed in terms of experiences (negative or positive), it is also being responded to by the acts of liking, sharing, commenting and so on. These ideas of the types of experiences gained and how they are responded create certain norms, values, rituals and codes that the members of community follow. Adam and Smith (2008, cited in Seraj, 2012) describe it as an electronic tribe “exclusive, narrowly focused, network supported aggregation of human beings in cyberspace who are bound together by a common purpose and employ a common protocol and procedure for the consensual exchange of information and opinions” (pg. 217). Therefore, we are interested to study the culture of Facebook community by stressing on the idea that virtual communities are seen as having a consumption culture, where transmissions of information and interactions result in several emotional experiences, which are responded through a ‘sacred ceremony that draws persons together in fellowship and commonality´ (Carey, 1989; cited in Kozinets, 1999, p.253).

1.3 Literature Review
In the previous literature on virtual communities that we have come across, the research on understanding ‘virtual communities as a culture, and most importantly as a consumer culture is very little to almost non-existent. However in several studies, based on average time and usage of Facebook, human psychologists have been interested in looking at psychological effects of these social interactions on the user’s personalities. Researchers have focused on user’s Facebook-ing activity and its relation to self-esteem, self-consciousness, social integration and self-satisfaction (Lee et al, 2012), need for belongingness personal intimacy (McAndrew & Jeong, 2012), self-esteem, loneliness ad narcissism (Skues, Williams & Wise, 2012), social capital and social compensatory friending (Lee et al, 2012), self-presentation and self-worth (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012). A couple of researches on Facebook cultures have highlighted on usage of Facebook to understand rituals and norms, and ‘regrets´ as consequences of discrepancies between lived and mediated experiences. In this section we summarize on both of these types of researches:

A study of college students revealed that time spent on Facebook varies from 2 to 117 minutes per weekday and 0 to 165 minutes per day on a weekend (Pempek, Yermolayeva & Calvert, 2009). Another study highlighted the average time spent on Facebook-ing activity is 10-30 minutes (Ellison et al 2008; cited in Pempek, Yermolayeva & Calvert, 2009). While Facebook usage brings good social behaviours of integration and interactivity, excessive use
of the medium can generate negative feelings of sadness, jealousy, loneliness (McAndrew & Jeong, 2012). This research, although quantitative study sheds some light on what we have already established as the negative experiences in result of Facebook consumption.

While the activity of ‘friending’ being the most important characteristic of maintaining a profile (Lee et al, 2012), studies show that people are more likely to accept a friend request from someone that has an attractive profile picture as compared to someone with less attractive one (McAndrew & Jeong, 2012). This implies that one’s acceptability to social interaction is dependent on the attractiveness of one’s profile picture. Therefore, attractive profile picture works as a tool for impression management and public display of desired self (McAndrew & Jeong, 2012). On other hand, excessive photo keeping and profile updating activity and increased use of Facebook leads to increase chances of loneliness, self-esteem and narcissism (Skues, Williams & Wise, 2012). Studies show that people with less number of real-life friends try to compensate for this deficiency by indulging in more online friendship which Zywica and Danowski, (2008; cited in Lee et al, 2012) call as ‘social compensatory friending’. Ellison et al. (2007, cited in Pempek, Yermolayeva & Calvert, 2009) also found similar evidence that those individuals who have low social capital make use of Facebook-ing activity to build their social capital. This highlights on the ‘need’ and ‘desire’ to look for several experiences like warmth in shape of friending. However, the study describes an interesting term of ‘internet paradox’, whereas a person with low self-esteem benefits from increased social interaction over Facebook, while increased use of internet and decreased physical activity would result in loneliness and isolation (Kraut et al., 1998; cited in Skues, Williams & Wise, 2012).

An online and virtual nature of Facebook creates a veil between an individual and his/her social interactions. It leaves a possibility that a user is capable to control and mould his/her identity to display, called as “idealized-virtual hypothesis” (Back et al., 2010, cited in Nadkarni & Hofmann 2012; p. 246). This gives a person plenty of opportunities to consciously select which side of personality he/she aims to represent in form of profile, photos and posts on Facebook. This idealized virtual hypothesis creation, along with excessive use of Facebook creates Narcissist behaviour- repeatedly and excessively posting and checking own profiles, photos and self-promotional activities (Skues Williams & Wise, 2012). Moreover, with increased use of smart phones among individuals, a trend of taking selfies (self-taken personal pictures) for the purpose of posting on Facebook seems to have impacted on narcissist behaviours.
With regards to self-presentation and self-worth, studies among college students present that they heavily rely on expression of their identity with respect to romantic relationships, work and worldviews (Arnett, 2000; cited in Pempek, Yermolayeva & Calvert, 2009) and Facebook provides such unique opportunity to students for display of their identities. Therefore, studies from a Dutch social networking site show that self-esteem and self-worth among teens is highly related to tone of responses received about information that they posted on their profile (Valkenburg, Peter, & Schouten, 2006, cited in Pempek Yermolayeva & Calvert, 2009). This implies that individual’s self-created personality (desired/real) over virtual social networks is directly related to their self-worth and overall well-being. Some studies have also highlighted the importance of an individual’s levels of self-consciousness in personality with relation to his/her use of Facebook. Lee et al. (2012) found that people with low self-esteem tend to share more information over Facebook in comparison to people with high self-esteem, whereas the former are considered to act as high public self-consciousness in comparison to latter who are high private self-conscious. Moreover, people with high private self-consciousness and high-self-esteem are less likely to share personal information and indulge into friending activity with strangers.

While majority of studies present user’s indulgence into multiple Facebook-ing activities, some studies also highlight the role of user’s as active and passive receivers of information. A study on college students found that a major amount of time spent on Facebook is for ‘lurking’ - looking at other’s profiles and posts without intention or act of responding (Pempek Yermolayeva & Calvert, 2009). The authors found that a majority (44.57%) of respondents spent ‘quite a bit’ of time looking at other’s profiles, photos, and their wall posts from other friends. Therefore, even if social media platform like Facebook is considered different from traditional platforms like Television and Radio due to interactive nature, it still serves the purpose of a ‘bulletin board’ where users act as passive consumers of information. This passive role of a user is also likely to have psychological and emotional effects based on the type of information they receive. This may also be due to the loose and superficial ‘friending’ relationship users may have with hundreds or thousands of friends over Facebook (Dunbar, 2011 & Tong et al., 2008, cited in Skues, Williams & Wise, 2012). A research also describes respondent’s account of Facebook experience as ‘creepy’ where she had not interacted with a friend for years and heard about her breakup with her boyfriend through her change on Facebook’s relationship status. Moreover, empirical studies show that excessive use of Facebook is correlated to frequent episodes of jealousy and other similar behaviours.
This is also supported by another study where respondents (76.09%) said that Facebook-ing had a “somewhat negative effect” on their personality. This extended nature of Facebook friending coupled with user’s self-promotional and socially desirable efforts generate negative feelings among users at receiving end. The authors also found that constantly reading about others positive and happy posts generates feelings of unhappiness, especially among heavy users (Chou & Edge, 2012). Therefore, even if these studies (of quantitative in nature) do not highlight the possible causes, motivations behind Facebook usage, they still highlight on sufficient emotional responses or experiences that are being generated with Facebook usage. In short, the consumption of information, and sometimes excessive consumption generates feelings of unhappiness, and sadness which we aim to understand from consumption point of view.

Croft (2013), in a 6 years longitudinal (virtual-ethnographic) study attempted to understand the evolving phenomenon of virtual interactions that occur among participant on different social networking sites to find out the discursive acts and ritual practices on these sites. He actively participated in networks like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram by sharing photos, statuses, comments, and so on and found that these networks are consisted on strong rituals and norms of help and reciprocity, appreciation towards originality of narratives, and value towards authenticity. Croft, like Seraj (2012), also identified the notion of strong and weak ties by calling them concentric and adhoc groups where in former, he was kept for long term while in latter, only for short terms. He also commented that the discussion of experiences in terms of authentic and interesting narratives was glue that binds these communities. Therefore, with Croft’s study we highlight on presence of strong rituals and norms that determine how participants in consumption culture respond to different experiences. Portwood-Stacer (2012), however, interestingly studies on the Facebook abstainers to give an important dimension from a neo-liberal consumer culture. She studied that her Facebook abstainers were actually non-conspicuous, by publicly announcing their quitting (discursive actions), a phenomenon she calls as ‘Facebook suicide’. These individuals, she claims are called ‘holdouts’, ‘resisters’, ‘downsizers’ or ‘refuseniks’ and are mostly not seen as ‘normal’ among their social groups. Lastly, we quote another research on Facebook-ing and binge drinking among teens, and their interconnection. Brown and Gregg (2012) studied the nexus between contemporary drinking culture and the hedonistic uses of social networking sites like Facebook. They argued that teenagers, in an attempt to differentiate themselves from others, indulge in risky behaviours like binge drinking in order to be able to show their ‘risky’, and
´regrettable´ narratives which are applauded among teens on Facebook. The authors comment that binge drinking on Facebook is highly a public display, which gives an opportunity to teenagers to show their risky and daring side to extended public audiences. The authors comment that these pleasures in a mediated environment like Facebook provide a reason to risky and daring behaviours in lived or real lives, while regarding Facebook page maintenance and drinking alcohol to be ´necessarily re-creational´ (Race 2009; cited in Brown & Gregg, 2012, p.365). Such acts however, cause severe consequences like rape and physical abuse among girls and car accidents among teenage boys in Australia. As we see it, Facebook becomes a necessary component on everyday life and to some, it is also an addiction (Karppi, 2011; cited in Portwood-Stacer, 2012).

Based on the literature and these notions of vulnerability, abnormality, tension between lived experiences, rituals, traditions, networking and many others, we regard understanding the Facebook culture as a consumption culture to be highly important. By understanding Facebook community from a consumption culture point of view, we will be able to reveal and highlight on basic motivations behind Facebook usage, the experiences that the consumers gain out of it, and their potential value in user´s social life. Therefore, we aim to approach this topic by asking a research question:

**How and what we consume when we consume Facebook?**

By taking a CCT approach in answering our research question, we aim to highlight on the basics of what lies behind these acts of consuming the information and experiences of pleasures and pains. Often we see our friends posting on Facebook very frequently; we also listen to and participate in conversations about the Facebook activities of friends and mutual friends. Within these conversations we also observe the notions of self-consciousness in terms of carefully selecting posts (images and even words in statuses) in order to present a better-self on this networks. Therefore, by looking at Facebook culture from consumption perspective, we aim to reveal, highlight, and interpret the meanings and motives behind Facebook consumption, that are not very obvious on the surface level of this activity.
2.0 Consumer Culture Theory: A Highlight

Consumer research in very broad terms is defined as “the study of consummation in all its many aspects” (Holbrook 1987, cited in Simonson et al, 2001, p.259). Consumer culture therefore is “social arrangement in which the relations between lived culture and social resources, and between meaningful ways of life and the symbolic and material resources on which they depend, are mediated through markets” (Arnauld & Thompson, 2005, p.869). That means that consumer culture helps understand the consumptions of market-created commodities and symbols through the lens of lived culture and social resources depending upon individual’s free will in private sphere of life (Holt, 2002; Arnould & Thompson, 2005). These consumer culture ‘symbols’ have emerged out of postmodernist culture, so much so that Kozinets regards that it is harder to separate both (1999). Therefore, we aim at establishing the basic foundations of postmodernism in relation to consumer cultures before extending the discussion on consumer culture theory.

2.1 CCT Stems from Postmodernism

The very notion of postmodernism in consumer cultures is based on the idea that there have been fundamental changes in the ways goods are used in a society. These changes have transformed the goods from use-value to symbolic-value with the help of signs, logos, narratives, art and aesthetics and so on. Postmodernity, as the name suggests is ‘post’ ‘modernity’, where Geertz (1973; cited in Firat & Venkatesh, 1995) regards modernity in reference to late sixteenth and early seventeenth century where rationality, market economy prevailed and there were very clear differences between production and consumption. Postmodernity as misunderstood or confused, however is not as a negation to modernity and regarding postmodernism as a mere negation will make the term ‘ill-defined’ (Featherstone, 2007). It rather appeared as a response to modernity by highlighting the lack of sufficiency in accommodating the cultural dimensions in consumption, rational thinking and market economy. Postmodernity criticizes on modernity’s approach by claiming that culture is insufficiently presented whereas it is highly interpreted in the markets. Therefore, postmodernity is not a negation, rather it is a maturity and extension to modernity. (Jenks 1987; cited in Firat & Venkatesh, 1995). In Consumer Culture Theory, Firat and Venkatesh (1995) describe it as an extension where cultural inclusion in its most obvious and unobvious dimension like language, myths, narratives, aesthetics and so on, along with their meanings become primary forces to understand market economy of production and consumption.
With narratives and myths, signs and symbols and languages as primary forces of culture, postmodernity welcomes multiple interpretations of pre-set marketplace symbols and signs. Postmodernity empowers the consumers to create different, even conflicting interpretations of signs set by the market. The interpretations set by the marketplace with significations of signs and symbol is called as market-logic, which can be challenged by the postmodern consumer. By this we mean, that ‘M’ for McDonald can be given multiple interpretations by consumers, some recent examples of McDonald’s being accused of spreading obesity epidemic change the previous meanings of M, from being ‘fun’ to being ‘harmful’. By this we mean that consumers are now empowered to create their own meanings and truths, which Baudrillard (1987; cited in Firat & Venkatesh, 1995) calls as hyperreality, a reality which is seen as ‘more real than the real itself’. This hyperreality arises from multiple interpretations or multiple truths, each appearing more real than the real itself. Therefore, the notion of hyperreality denies the possibility of any ultimate truth (Foucault 1980; cited in Firat & Venkatesh, 1995), something that was the ‘only truth’ in modernity. The postmodernism has empowered individuals to question this ‘system’.

In order to construct such hyperreality with multiple interpretations, knowledge and power appear as two strong tools; where knowledge appears as a source for liberating truths whereas power is used to force such ideological dominations of truth (Foucault 1980; cited in Thompson & Tambyah 1999). Such ideologies within a society are routinely emphasized, (for example emphasizing McDonalds for obesity) with the source of power, and they become the acceptable norms within the society. Such information or knowledge comes from various sources, most importantly through media, which includes both traditional and new media. Lahman (1993 et al; in Firat & Venkatesh, 1995) regards this new media as cyberculture- where technology, specifically Web 2.0 becomes the major source of ideological formations, routinized and repeated to become the acceptable norms. Under this cyberculture of Web 2.0, ideologies and norms are created with endless interactions in form of User Generated Content (UGC). This gives a lot of power to consumers in postmodern world, whereas such power only resided in hands of corporations in a modern world (Appadurai, 2007).

However, this also points to the field of critical postmodernism, where there are concerns of multiple interpretations turning anything or everything to a commodity. This endless commercialization is likely to create severe consequences of loss of commitment, loss of social compassions, or even hedonism (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995). In a hyperreal world where
everybody is creating an individual or even multiple truth(s), signs, symbols and narratives would lose their identity and merely become tool of ideological formations. This is where lines between real and imaginary start to blur, hyperreality becomes the reality, whereas humans are decentralized and fragmented (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995).

Kozinets (2001; cited in Arnould & Thompson, 2005) adds the notion of free, yet conflicting personalities, identities and meanings to make sense of patterns with individual’s lived and mediated experiences. This collective sense of environments makes it interesting as it provides a frame for Consumer culture theorists to look for patterns of behaviours and sense-making interpretations to be understood in consumer culture (Askegaard & Kjeldgaard 2002; Holt 1997; Kozinets 2002; Thompson & Hirschman 1995; cited in Arnould & Thompson, 2005). By this definition, CCT makes it possible to understand the broader socio-historical forces of culture as cultural narratives, myths and ideologies, that constitute, sustain and transform such actions and behaviours into ‘culture’ (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Therefore, CCT theorists study ‘within’ a consumption context as opposed to studying the ‘consumption contexts’ in order to generate new constructs and theoretical insights (Geertz 1973; cited in Arnould & Thompson, 2005).

2.2 CCT as a Theoretical Lens
Historically, CCT has been rooted in the need to understand the neglected experiential, symbolic, social and cultural dimensions of consumption in context of consumption cycle of acquisition, possession and consumption and disposal (Belk 1987a, 1987b; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982; cited in Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Today, these experiential, symbolic and cultural dimensions have further grown to look at broader categories in the context of practices of individuals in everyday lived experiences. These experiences have wide dimensions crucial to CCT theorists like everyday interactions with friends, family, strangers, daily routines, habitual and novel activities and practices that form strong patterns of certain attitudes and behaviours by individuals. Therefore, research into fields like gift-giving rituals (Belk 1976; Joy 2001; Mick and DeMoss 1990; Ruth, Otnes, and Brunei 1999; Sherry 1983; Wooten 2000; cited in Arnould & Thompson, 2005), skydiving experiences, juggling lifestyles of mothers and many other activities is of interest to CCT theorists (Thompson 1996; cited in Simonson et al., 2001). This turns CCT into a very diverse, yet very focused and individual field that amalgamates historical, anthropological, sociological and psychological that interrelates to form a broader area of consumer culture theory. Belk (1986,
p. 423, cited in Simonson et al., 2001) recommends regarding consumer behaviour as a distinct field instead of a subset to any of the above mentioned fields.

A lot of attention has been given to the research on consumption and possession practices of consumption cycle such as hedonic, aesthetic and ritualistic dimensions of brands and symbols (e.g., Belk, Ger, and Askegaard 2003; Belk et al. 1989; Fournier 1998; Grayson and Shulman 2000; Hirschman; cited in Arnould & Thompson, 2005). In CCT, consumers have been identified as active participants in creating symbolic meanings and interpretations from everyday consumption of brands, advertisements and other material goods and services to create individualistic meanings in possibly hedonic, aesthetic and ritualistic way. Therefore, marketplace provides ample opportunities to consumers and to construct individual and collective identities, through material goods and services and non-material symbols and experiences (e.g., Thompson & Hirschman 1995; Murray 2002; Schau & Gilly 200; cited in Simonson et al., 2001). Simonson et al, (2001) interestingly call it as ´hot´ aspects of consumer behaviour like arousal, regret, low involvement peripheral persuasion, hedonistic aspects of consumption, conflicts and self-expressive motives that are now given importance in consumer research against the long-studied ´cold´ aspects like attention, perception.

These consumer identity projects, as Arnould and Thompson (2005) refer, forms a holistic CCT research tradition in which marketplace becomes a prominent part in consumers, even who lack resources, seek and form identities through symbols, narratives, and experiences. Therefore these identity projects are goal driven, even though these goals are very vaguely defined, may cause contrasting or and conflicting identities (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). These symbols and narratives are very crucial in this new Technological culture as individuals on social media have access to new (and free) social space to share their authentic narratives, use symbols like photos, quotations, articles and share personal experiences in broader domains of everyday activities.

Further, marketplace offers possibilities to fulfil individualistic goals, they are actually enacting on cultural scripts of consumer-driven global economy. Grayson and Martinec (2004; cited in Arnould & Thompson, 2005) study experiences of authenticity that tourists aim to look for, but they rather end up in ´tourists-settings´ created to form imaginative and fantasy-oriented elaborations, even if they are not completely authentic. This is even truer for all digital consumptions where consumers relate themselves to online communities of brands and interests, where participants are made to form individual, yet collective identities by
participating in an environment where the format is often pre-set for them. Most of these communities do not charge anything for membership, but once an individual is a participant, he/she is ‘supposed’ to act under the acceptable norms and patterns of consumption by using similar symbols and language.

‘Marketplace cultures’ provides another holistic CCT tradition where consumers come out from traditional cultural settings to form new cultures based on collective identities and shared beliefs, under the realms of globalization, post-industrial and socioeconomic transformations. These global and post-industrial changes have evolved consumers from passive receivers to active co-producers or co-creators of new cultures. Under these forces, consumers look for autonomous and individualistic personal distinctiveness and forge traditional rituals to look for solidarity and solitude in new global world. The study of Facebook as a culture in this post-modern world would provide great insights upon the patterns and behaviours going on in this ‘market-place’ mediated through Technological Culture. In postmodern culture, individuals are constantly negotiating meaning from lived and mediated experiences to maintain their identity. This, along with symbolic identity creation may result in “symbolic overload” (Thompson, 1995; cited in Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998, p.5). Therefore, this research will also let us see the shifts from traditional cultures of socializing to the non-traditional virtual milieu, within the current post-modern settings. We will also highlight the culture from liberatory and political perspectives by including the examples of people who are outside this culture. We conclude this discussion by replicating Hannerz’s idea that, postmodernist culture provides situations where "people must deal with other peoples' meanings..at times, perhaps, one can just ignore them. Often enough however, one may comment on them, object to them, feel stimulated by them, take them over for oneself, defer to them, or take them into account in any of a number of otherways” (1992; cited in Arnould & Thompson, 2005, p.877).
3.0 Methodology

The methodological stance in our research is led by the research question: how and what we consume when we consume Facebook? This research question has been raised out of our personal experiences, which is a widely acclaimed reason or stimulus for conducting research in social sciences (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.5). For theoretical development in reference to research question, Whetten (1989) uses ´what´, ´how´ and ´why´ as the basis, where what and how attempt to define the phenomenon whereas why describes the possible reasoning. During formation of our research question in relation to Facebook, we noticed that most of the users are very active in posting things like every day routines activities like drinking coffee, watching a movie to big news like getting married, got a job; however, they were not posting so much about the unpleasant experiences like lost a job, feeling miserable etc. We also observed that the immense usage of Facebook at home, work, school, social places like restaurants and social gatherings is blurring the line between work and leisure. Although based on these experiences, our research question is loosely formed to theory, we can still justify it to have strong theoretical backing to the social culture of online communities emerged out of new Technology Culture. Furthermore, Learmonth (2008; cited in Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.5) criticizes on the emphasis to have any strong evidence in the beginning of research; he opines that evidence-based research limits or obstructs to what can be counted as ´legitimate research´. He further emphasizes that ´evidence´ is just never there waiting to be found, but rather the process is inherently ideological and evidence is needed to be constructed. This process is rather ´iterative´, where researcher can weave back and forth between theory and data (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.13). As Bacharach (1989, p.496) defines theory as “no more than a linguistic device used to organize a complex empirical world”, our loosely formed theory would help us organize and look for likely research methods. Bryman and Bell (2011, p.13) relate the iterative approach to be evident in grounded theory, which supports the idea that data collection and analysis are interconnected where theories are built from data after a systematic process of data collection and analysis (Strauss & Corbin 1998; cited in Bryman & Bell 2011, p.577). Therefore, the data collection and analysis will be based on research question loosely connected to CCT theories, and this link will be strengthened and grounded in our analysis and discussions.

Validity is defined as “ensuring what you are observing, identifying or measuring what you say you are” Bryman and Bell (2011, p.395), therefore we look for defining clear ´objects of study´ from our research question. The task of interpreting the data in relation to ´culture´
makes the method both challenging and interesting. Culture, as defined earlier is “a set of values ideas, meanings and symbols that help individuals to communicate and interpret a common sense of identity and understanding towards a certain behaviour” (Davis 1984, cited in Seraj, 2012, p.216). Kozinets (2010) further extends this to definition of cyberculture by quoting Pierre Levy’s (2001; cited in Kozinets 2010, p.10) as “the set of technologies (material and intellectual), practices, attitudes, modes of thought, and values that develop along with the growth of cyberspace”. We are also interested in the anthropological explanation of this new culture by David Hakken (1999; cited in Kozinets 2010, p.11) “the new computer based ways of processing information seems to come with a new social formation; or in anthropological parlance, cyberspace is a distinct type of culture”. Therefore, as per both definitions, we infer that in this new culture we are looking for both verbal and non-verbal modes of communication, interactions, and ´new social formations´.

3.1 Research Strategy
“Methods are neither neutral nor entirely suffused with intellectual inclinations”, suggest Bryman and Bell (2011, p.4). Therefore it is imperative to have a clear research strategy as ´a general orientation to conduct a research´ (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.26). Based on constructionist and interpretivist philosophical position and inductive theoretical stance, we consider qualitative research strategy as most appropriate (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.27). Moreover, with support of our philosophical stance, the role of researcher here would be to interpret, and narrate and the social actions of the participants of culture, through verbal and non-verbal forms. The objective is to understand the actions of participants and the interpretations of those actions by other participants involved in this culture, which can ideally be captured with qualitative strategy (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2008). As cyber culture is constantly (and implicitly) created and re-created through experiences, events, stories, signs and symbols and meanings, researchers are required to be ´part´ of such constructions, a process which backs qualitative strategy. Finally, our interpretivist approach in understanding and explaining our research question requires us to be empathic position, which at best can also be done with qualitative method (Bryman & Bell 2011, p.16).

While qualitative strategy becomes a general orientation towards conducting a research, we argue for a combination of netnography, interviews and follow-up as choice of method for conducting qualitative method. Netnography or virtual-ethnography, as the terms suggests, is a specialized form of ethnography to facilitate the computer-mediated conversations in a
cyberculture (Kozinets, 2010, p.1). As established on the importance of non-verbal language used in online cultures, netnography helps understand the self-presentational strategies used by participants to digitally present themselves in an online environment (Kozinets, 2010, p.2). It helps researchers to grasp the uniqueness of interactions and conversations occurring in an the environment.

While the culture of Facebook is completely online, one could argue for the sole use of netnography in our research. However, we present the mix of netnography, interviews and follow-up for several reasons: firstly, Bruckan (2006; cited in Kozinets 2010. p.46) establishes that online interviews are relatively far less in value in comparison to face-to-face ones. This stance is supported by Kozinets (2010, p.46) only when it comes to text-based or chat interviews, where interviews through emails, audio, or audio-visual interviews, are of equal value. Secondly, in online ethnography, where the participant is body-less, it is hard to understand and interpret the body language and gestures. Nonetheless, the netnography is important to understand the culture that is completely present online and to keep track of day-to-day observations, activities and actions conducted in an online environment which cannot be grasped by only ethnography or other methods (Kozinets 2010 p.46). Therefore, Kozinets (2010; p.55) suggest that it is imperative that other research methods, like ethnography and interviews, complement and extend the netnographic methods by having in-person, face-to-face interviews. Lastly, the choice of combination of netnography, interviews and follow-up is an attempt to achieve ‘triangulation’, by which we aim to gain greater confidence in our findings (Bryman & Bell 2011. p.397).

3.2 Research Method and Data collection
Basing the research strategy on triangulation technique, we decided to go for netnographic e-journals, follow-ups and interviews. A total of 16 respondents (as users, quitter and non-beginner of Facebook) were selected for this study. The number was not pre-decided, it rather appeared out of our three weeks’ of data collecting and analysing process. This is supported by Strauss and Corbin’s (1998, cited in Bryman & Bell 2010, p.443) ideas on sampling until the category saturates or no new data emerges out. We followed the same approach as we were reflexive about choice of method(s) and quality of responses we would be getting. Therefore, we constantly adopted on new methods as we proceeded into data collection phase. E-diaries or e-journals were a first method, followed by interviews and follow-up. The idea was to triangulation and validity and reliability (by incorporating Facebook quitter and
non-beginners), and also ensuring the quality of responses for analysis and theoretical linking. The sampling method used was purposive and snowball sampling as this is considered to be an ideal one in participant-observation/follow-up research (Bryman & Bell, 2010, p.441); we extended this sampling further to be ‘purposive sampling’, which means sampling respondents in a strategic way so that only those that are relevant to our research are sampled (Bryman & Bell, 2010, p.441). A short summary of participants and their profiles is presented in the Appendix.

3.2.1 E-journals at Step 1
Online diaries or e-journals is a netnographic interviewing method where participants document their day-to-day or even hour-to-hour events, reflections, impressions or experiences (Kozinets, 2010, p.46). It is also very useful method in understating an online culture where participants have the luxury of being reflective, thoughtful and open-ended in expressing their ideas and activities (Kozinets, 2010, p.46). We approached this method by inviting participants to ‘volunteer’ for this study based on the idea of purposive sampling by posting the topic ‘The usage of ´ and the need for participants, as a ´ Facebook status´. The post received more than 20 responses from ´friends´. We later sent them a private message with the e-journal process and details, and promised their anonymity in our analysis. We were aware of the possible problems of influencing the respondents by selecting friends through Facebook, most importantly, the extreme consequences of ´going native´, a terms used for ethnographer’s to be completely immerse into the field to lose sense difference between their interpretations and those of participant’s (Bryman & Bell, 2010, p. 438). Nevertheless, our method is justified on two grounds; firstly, the notion of ´friends´ on Facebook is a tricky one, as the network also consists of acquaintances, and strangers as friends. The respondents who volunteered for this study were those that we haven’t met in last 2-3 years. Secondly, the process of e-journal required a lot of participation in terms of time, energy and efforts to write, which is unlikely to be received from strangers without any physical reward. We noticed that the volunteers were those friends who were physically close to us at some stage in life. Dalton (Bryman & Bell, 2010, p.441) justifies this stance by establishing that very often ethnographers receive indifference from strangers and therefore should be relieved to have interested volunteers who they know in person. A total of 7 volunteer friends, therefore served as cooperative participants as they made e-notes (through Facebook inbox), interacted whenever we needed further information and responded to questions with detailed answers.
3.2.2 Interviews and follow-up at Stage 2

Interviews in face-to-face formats are simpler, easier and less time-consuming format of data collection (Kozinets, 2010, p.55). The entries from e-journals served as an interview guide towards a semi-structured interviews format. With a total of 8 respondents, we conducted 7 interviews (6 individuals and 1 as a couple) in categories of users, quitters and non-beginner. The Interviews lasted for about 40-50 minutes each. We took the approach of convenience and snowball sampling based on justifications made above. For selecting participants for interviews with Facebook users, we took the previous approach of posting the topic on various Facebook groups like ‘Lund social zone, international students in Lund, friends in Lund’. Interestingly, most (but not all) the responses were from our class-fellows and therefore, based on our e-journal experiences with quality and closeness to friends, we decided to go for 5 acquaintances and 1 stranger. For the interviews with quitter and non-beginner, we used snowball sampling methods and conducted 1 interview in each category. The depth of the interview, quality of the data and obstacles in finding respondents as Facebook quitter and non-beginner are justifications for selecting one respondent in each category. These two categories served us in understanding things from interesting perspective of non-participants of Facebook culture.

Participant-observation is a great way to get an insider perspective in a culture and mostly include an interview at the end of the observation (Bryman & Bell 2010, p.426). In our research, we took the same approach, but modified it by making one of us (researchers) keep a follow-up with a friend close friend for about 1 week to discuss his activity on. This ‘follow-up’, as we call it included informal chit-chats or conversations with a friend every day for about 30 minutes. The followed-up person or the respondent was aware of the research topic, which made it possible to have an ‘overt’ participant approach (Bryman & Bell, 2010, p.436). This approach gives ease and freedom to get an entry into participant´s personal space. Therefore, we believed that in order to understand the virtual culture of Facebook, it was even more important to have a close friend, as he may become a key informant. However, we were aware of the risks of researcher ‘going native’, and tried to minimize this by being more reflexive each day. The interviews as well as the follow-ups were recorded and later transcribed.
4.0 Facebook Rituals and Norms

Ritual is a “language that defines right way of doing things and provides a social coding of experiences” (Levy & Zaltman 1975; Levi-Strauss 1962; Bossard & Boll 1950; Firth 1973; cited in Rook, 1985, p.255). In cultural contexts, social norms are “customary values that govern behaviour in groups and societies” (Geertz, 1973; cited in Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2011). We start our analysis section by laying the foundations of Facebook culture by understanding its rituals and norms. Further, we develop this idea that Facebook culture is embedded with certain routines, rituals and conscious and unconscious that helps in interpreting how people act or behave on Facebook.

4.1 We Meet, We Greet, We Exchange: Facebook as a starting point

Like any other community, connectivity, relationship maintenance, exchange of information and interactions are building blocks of virtual community structure of Facebook. Our respondents also identified Facebook community as a platform to stay connected and stay updated. One of the respondent quotes:

“The main reason I use Facebook is because I have lived in three countries in not so many years...and everybody is on Facebook...the beauty of Facebook is that you don’t have to send an email, or message them specially...you can just see what’s happening in their lives on Facebook...and even if you don’t participate, you know there is some kind of connection...”

Therefore, connectivity is a first step towards further interactions; connectivity becomes the motivation. Rook writes that rituals are used for inclusion or exclusion people from community membership (Rook, 1985). Here in our case, the ease and convenience of staying in contact with people all over the world is the basic motivation behind Facebook consumption. Our next respond quotes on all the fun activities that make Facebook attractive medium:

“Really easy to share pictures with them...I have private groups with them for conversations where we shares pictures...like funny stories...basically we share on everyday ...and also to keep track of people who are, a bit of...outside to ‘inner circle’”

After establishing a ‘connection’, the other motivation is to be able to share funny stories, and pictures where friends can comment, and keep the discussion going in a fun and lighter mode. Apart from fun activities, other users have highlighted on ease of organizing events, meetings, and parties, whereas Facebook non-users have highlighted upon failing to have a
continuous catching-up with friends and missing out on social events. The first step towards connectivity and interaction also sets a place for the development of a ritual, as Rook (1985, p.252) identifies that “familiarity’ and continuous interactivity is a first step towards a ritual formation”. Looking other types of habits these interactions develop into?

“When people ask questions like...I got one of my job, my internship because a friend of mine posted a question to send cv.... Ohh and also like I am travelling to Rome next week, so any suggestion? So this is where Facebook is really good at...there is a network of people who ask for information, friends re-post your questions as well... and those who share it...”

Seeking help by asking questions is another important activity that Facebook culture facilitates; on a platform where there are ‘friends’, exchange of information to help each other is a norm, it is a step further into relationship building. We refer to one respondent calling Facebook as ‘Ask.com’, where one has a wide network of friends, ‘helping’ each other in seeking jobs, travelling advices, buying new phone, suggesting a movie or a book and a lot more.

Douglas and Isherwood maintain that the ritual setting is served for the purpose of specific consumption and within that context these consumption artefacts have particular symbolic meanings (1979; cited in Rook, 1985). We have established in previous chapters that the basic ‘commodity’ or the ‘good’ on Facebook is information and experiences. But it is also interesting to see that this information does not stand as a sole artefact without the presence of information providers. This is because this information is a result of interaction, and there is purposeless without the context and a human resource. This human resource is actually a prime reason that people look for connectivity, and interaction, which separates it from Ask.com or even Google. Therefore, the role of participants in context of information is equally important as this ‘information’ is their own ideas, their narratives, and images. As this quote interprets:

“Checking up my Facebook is usually the first thing in the morning/afternoon...it’s a part of my daily ritual. For me it’s like reading the newspaper. For a fact I know if there's anything important happening in this world my friends on Facebook won't spare it...”

The exchange of information, and most importantly the ones bringing this information are basic commodity in this consumption culture. Therefore, be it a helper or a social updater, Facebook culture mediates very strong and convenient ways for exchange of information to
support, help, and give information. Giving is clearly a rewarding act as it stimulates patterns of social exchange and strengthens social ties (Komter, 1996). Such social acts are seen in classic giving example of gift-giving, where it is seen as a mechanism to start and maintain social relationships (Komter, 1996). Similarly on Facebook, the act of giving the information or social updates can be seen in similar fashion of gift-giving, as a tool for social relationship maintenance. But what value do these gifts have? And how these social-exchanges through rituals of ‘giving’ take place?

From consumer culture perspective, it is interesting to draw attention upon the Kopytoff´s theory (1986; cited in Corrigan, 1997, p.33-39) of use-value, and McCracken´s further extension to sign-value (1988; cited in Corrigan 1997, p.33). While fist idea of use-value of information in terms of ‘getting internship through friend’s post on Facebook’ certainly defines how the commodity (internship post) from one person was useful to another. But the question arises is: like any commodity sold in the marketplace, what is the price of this information? On Facebook medium where this information is consumed, and materialized into ´internship´, there was no materialistic or monetary exchange. So, is there a possibility that such a valuable and productive (useful) commodity is without any exchange? McCraeken’s argument on ‘sign-value’ highlights this possibility. With an extreme example of how a commodity can be bound to “highly restricted sphere of circulation within family, like furniture and special some pieces of clothing” (p.33), he emphasizes on the ways consumption took place in communities, before the emergence of marketplace. These communities, widely known as Gemeinschafts, are based on small geographical boundaries where ‘everybody knew everybody else’ (Corrigan, 1997, p.17). By previously establishing on Facebook as a community, we construct on the possibility that participants of this community share sign-value of information as an exchange. We can also create a ‘gift-giving’ analogy to this exchange where the gifts do not require a monetary return, but rather it increases the bond of ‘friendship’ (Komter, 1996). Gouldner, take Malinowski’s ideas on ‘free gift’ by referring that it is a ‘norm of beneficence’ or the ‘norm of something for nothing’, which is highest form of giving and selflessness (1973; cited in Komter, 1996, p.301). In McCracken’s accounts, we would refer to this as a sign-value, that this help in getting him internship, came from a friend. Just like a use-value of an inherited sweater also has a strong sign-value of family inheritance in McCracken’s accounts (1998; cited in Corrigan 1997, p.34), the use-value of an ‘internship’ has a sign-value that it came from a
‘friend’, by somewhat securing the ‘sacredity’ of the object from turning into a complete commodity in a marketplace.

With giving comes moral obligation to return; the selflessness in giving (something for nothing) can only be seen as an extreme example of ‘pure-gifts’ whereas another common form of giving is called ‘barters or exchange’ (Komter, 1996, p.300). Relating these examples to the giving ritual on Facebook, it is a good idea to question the possibility of ‘exchange’. Kopytoff’s (1986; cited in Corrigan 1997, p.33), in extension of Karl Marx’s ideas, argues that the common feature of a commodity is in its exchange-value. Even though we do not consider Facebook as an ideal marketplace by establishing that it is a community, the relation of gift-giving rituals make it possibility to see if there is any exchange-value of information on Facebook culture. If so, what kind of exchange fulfils this moral obligation? A quote from a respondent highlights:

“I usually think that on Facebook, there should be some sort of give and take somehow, because I usually take and take and take advice, but I don’t contribute so much to community nowadays, but when I do write something, I’m just asking stuff, usually if you are in a relationship or in a friend group, you know, you have to give in order to get something, but the way I use Facebook today is just asking asking asking, not contributing myself”

This shows a very strong consciousness, coupled with embarrassment of only ‘asking’ from a community and not contributing enough. This highlights that there is moral obligation of giving back something instead of only asking. This exchange, as Mauss (1923; cited in Komter, 1996) describes this as a mutual obligation and works as a binding force within a culture.

From previous example of sign-value from internship, we observe a strong possibility of exchange-value, even within community of friends. The previous quote only highlights the consciousness in a person ‘asking’, we are interested to see if this consciousness is in a ‘giver’ as well. In short, is this exchange forced?

“There is also this thing on Facebook that I have so many ‘Facebook friends’...I haven’t put my birth date on Facebook profile just because I don’t want to wish others on their birthday....because if they wish me on my birthday than I would have to do that too...and some of them I only met once in life so I am like ‘Okay, now I have to say happy birthday and I hope you have a great day and blah blah’...so this way when others can’t wish me...I don’t have to do that either!”
A respondent remark on ‘have to do that too’ makes it explicit that there is a norm/ritual of reciprocity. This exchange becomes even more important because like gifts, there is no money involved. Secondly, respondent also remarks that he met some of his friends only once in a lifetime and he doesn’t feel a need to wish them on birthday, which is very crucial and discussed in detail in later chapters. Here, it is interesting to see the relation of ‘social ties’, where the moral obligation to exchange is highly relevant to the social closeness to a person. Malinowski mentions this as the stronger the social-ties, the lesser the moral obligation and the higher the chances to have something as ‘free’ (1922; cited in Komter, 1996, p.301).

We would like to end our discussion here by linking Kopytoff’s ideas on the three types of values discussed above and their links to commodification and de-commodification of goods (1986; cited in Corrigan 1997. p.35). He provides an extreme example of a human commodity as a ‘slave’, which can be bought and sold in a perfectly commodified world; but once bought, he is de-commodified and gets an individual identity within the role of a ‘slave’ (p. 36). This seems to be true for all relationships in real-world, where people have different roles like at different times: a parent, an employee, a boss, a partner, a son and each role has different links to his monetary or non-monetary value within his social context. Likewise, when acquaintances or even strangers from different worlds become ‘friends’ on Facebook, they are de-commodified and transformed into a different identity or a role, where singularity, uniqueness and inexchangeability are prominent characteristics (p. 36).

4.2 I like You, I like You more, I don’t like You

A ritual occurs in an episodic string by following exact sequences to transfer a strong symbolic meaning (Rook, 1985). In this section we would mention how those ‘exchange’ occur in a ritualistic setting, what they mean to participants, and if these meanings are have multiple interpretations.

We found out that in Facebook culture, the moral obligations or the exchanges is done through the acts of Liking, Commenting and Ignoring (withholding a like or a comment). As detailed in the introduction, Facebook facilitates a wide category of verbal and non-verbal ways of expression. These all non-verbal signs are symbols not just reciprocal acts, but rather have a very strong symbolic expression of identity narrative, referred to as a ‘symbolic project’ (Thompson, 1995; cited in Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998). On Facebook, similar principles apply towards the acts of liking, commenting and ignoring where not only these
acts have different symbolic meanings, they also relate to individual self-identities in relation to a social ties. First, we would like to highlight and emphasize upon the symbolic meaning(s) and interpretations of these signs of liking, commenting in Facebook culture, and see the possibilities of expression with absence of a sign, like a dislike. We start with a quote:

“even without thinking, it happens like that...like for example someday I put up a status that a friend 'likes', and he is someone whom I haven’t had contact with for months...and few days later I see some of his status, and I 'like' it...it's like 'okay you like me, I like you'...its mostly unconscious, without any thinking...because you are curious how that person is doing, and you see their post and you like it...”

“it’s like....'ohh I am thinking of you...I am still connected to you' or something....specially in distant friends”

In first case, it is evident that a like neither means that a person actually likes the post or information that his friend just posted, nor does it mean that there is anything valuable to him; it is an unconscious act of reciprocity and exchange of like for a like, or as social psychologists Barry Schwartz calls ‘a psychological balance of debt’ (1967, cited in Komter, 1996, p.7). For the second account, a like has a meaning as a reminder of past event and a reminder of connectivity. Elliott & Wattanasuwan (1998) support the idea of having more than one meaning of a symbol, where in a symbolic rich environment, it is possible for an individual to have multiple symbolic meanings to create and construct multiple identities. We extend these symbolic meanings in relation to Kopytoff’s idea on multiple personalities and roles (established in previous section) by creation and interpretations of these multiple identities.

Ferdinand de Saussure (1974, cited in Corrigan 1997, p.75) was the first linguist to give the idea of signs: what they ‘mean’ and how these ‘meanings’ are established within a culture. He proposed the terms of signifier and signified where the former is an object and latter is the meaning given to that object. From his accounts, it can be interpreted that where the liking ‘button or the activity itself’ is the signifier, ‘a reminder’ ‘a connection’ ‘thinking of you feeling’ are these examples of signified; together they give meaning to the symbol Like. As it is evident, these likes as a signified are different for different individuals; whereas one person would like a photo because it reminds her of an event, the other might only like the same photo because it’s a good photo, the person in the photo is her best friend, for paying-off a social debt, or even for no conscious reason at all. Therefore, the relationship between the
signifier *like* and its signified meanings is arbitrary and is not dependent on the entity of the sign in itself (Columbia Dictionary of Modern Literacy and Cultural Criticism, p.278). The meanings behind signs and symbols in Facebook culture are varying and open to various interpretations. This point is emphasized by two different functions of symbolic meanings: one is directed towards self ‘self-symbolism’ while the other is directed towards the society ‘social-symbolism’ (Elliott, 1997; cited in Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998) By applying these two different symbolic meanings, one is attempting to fulfill two different roles in different identities: one is towards self: I liked his photo because he liked my photo, and towards his social contact/Facebook friends: I liked it as a reminder that I am thinking of you.

Next, we move to the ritual of commenting, a verbal way of expression and for this look at following accounts from e-journals:

**Resp:** “Checked Facebook, found one Chinese girl married a Finnish guy, feel amazing... I don’t know the guy at all, I have met the girl a couple of times, didn’t talk much, just know she is studying here in Vaasa”

**Intr:** Cool, so did you interact on their pictures or status? Likes? Comment? Anything.. It’s a pretty big new for them I guess?

**Resp:** Nah, I just saw it, that’s all, I didn’t do anything else...like I said, I don’t know them much, I would’ve felt a bit strange to comment there, but maybe a ‘like’ would be ok, but I didn’t do that.

Here in this example, the act of not commenting explains the possible symbolic expressions of *commenting*. It appears that the difference between liking and commenting is the level of closeness these Facebook friends. Even though the respondent ‘felt awesome’ about the wedding, it still felt inappropriate to comment on the picture because it might signify ‘I am feeling awesome on your wedding even though I don’t know you much’. For him, passing this message would signify a wrong meaning (social-symbolism), because he would not like to signal a message that he is stalking her. From other accounts we observed that *commenting* has a meaning of impression management within a social circle of friends. Our respondents quoted to have about 600-1200 Facebook friends, which determine that there is a big audience that may judge their personality basses on their acts of liking or commenting. As per one respondent:
“The main reason is that I have in mind that you are being watched by others, like whatever u comment, others can see it, so I rather keep it on a personal level and on a ’messaging level’ I would say”

Therefore, in Facebook culture, commenting not only signifies social closeness, it also signifies image building and impression management.

An interesting aspect of Facebook is that most of the signs and symbols are defined by the Facebook as a medium: like, comment, share as signs and participants use those signs to transfer symbolic expression. Is there a possibility that one can express a symbolic meaning without any presence of a sign? Dislike, as opposed to a like appears to be the most obvious sign that is missing on Facebook. We try to look for possible signified of a sign-less signifier with this quote:

“Sometimes I also get a bit annoyed...in US I’ve lived in South, they are really conservative...sometimes they post something that drives me really insane....posts like ’if you vote for Obama, you would go in hell...God knows better and blah blah blah’ and I am like ’I mean....reallyyyy!!!’...I would never comment or correct them because then it will start a war”

In this example, withholding the act of commenting on the post firstly signifies ‘conflict avoidance’, ‘annoyance’ and to an extent, impression maintenance. We also see some signs of sarcasm in respondent’s when the respondent says ‘I mean....reallyyy!!!’, which means that the post has no meaning or relevance to her context and to her, and it is funny to her. Many other respondents gave several examples where respondents would not like to comment or like to advocate others because it will create conflict. Freud (1959, 1962; cited in Rook, 1985) mentions a ritual as a defence, a way to keep oneself in track and protect oneself from dangers of the unconsciousness. In this case, the ritual of withholding works as a defence against withholding an impulse to indulge in a conflict.

Interestingly, respondents also highlighted upon the ritual of withholding on some posts because they are funny (in a stupid way) and they wanted to keep enjoying them. The question arises: why would they want to ´enjoy´ stupid posts from their own friends instead of commenting and correcting them? Is there a possibility that they judge their personality, above all their intellectuality and intelligence based on what they posts? One respondent quotes:
“About the less serious posts….I have a cousin who is very cheesy, and he has a girlfriend and every time he is posting something like with photos with rose petals and like ‘this is our one month anniversary’ and writes a poem and it’s horrible. And it’s very cheesy….make me puke and I am like ‘what do you think you are doing!!!”

It seems evident that there is a possibility that people judge others ideologies and identities on the basis of their information capital on Facebook. We link it to ‘Bourdieu’s high and low cultural capital’ (Bourdieu 1984; cited in Corrigan 1997, p.26-32). Bourdieu, draws on Veblen’s ideas of economic and cultural capital with the use of particular goods (possessions) and practices (lifestyles). He comments that people in societies move from lower to upper class system by gradual shifts in the good they consume. He gives a classic example of a consumer moving from ordinary red wine to sparkling white wine to whisky and finally cocktails for shifts in goods and move from Strauss’s Beautiful Blue Danube to Bach’s Well Tempered Clavier in taste of music in a lifestyle shift (Corrigan 1997, p. 27). He also comments that in order to show a cultural capital, one has to “allow the most social differences to be expressed through consumption of certain things and non-consummation of the others” (p.28). Therefore, our respondent’s accounts on ‘rose petals’ and ‘poems’ seen as ‘horrible and cheesy’, are a way to determine her cousin’s consumption of Facebook which makes her think ‘what do you think you are doing’. Bourdieu also highlight that cultural objects determine the subtle hierarchies that mark the stages and degrees of initiatory progress towards the enterprise of culture, which gradually lead a consumer from illiterate to literate via semi-literate and common-reader (p. 29). The respondent in this case comments in ways that determinate the stage of her cousin’s degree and progress of social hierarchy as between literate or semi-literate as she further quotes:

“may b in a community he lives in, its fine…but we don’t live in the same world...like if I did something like that...my friends would first think it’s a joke, and secondly they will laugh on it for years!!! I actually feel sorry for him...”

The respondent therefore, attempts to create a distinction of her consumption from that of her cousin’s by commenting that her friends would make fun of her. This is where she aims to highlight her degree of social hierarchy and literacy in relation to that of her cousin.

But the question is: which tools one must have to make an attempt to go up the ladder of social hierarchy by consumption of objects or lifestyles? Bourdieu calls it ‘education’ by claiming that education grants aesthetic capabilities that enable a person to have an evaluative
distance from things by calling it a Kantian and Anti-Kantian aesthetic (p.29). Where Anti-Kantian becomes popular culture, as everybody could keep roses or candles or has poetry to signify ´love´ or ´romance´ in a romantic relationship, Kantian aesthetic aims to develop a high cultural capital, but through an abstraction in signs. The same respondents accounts for another friend by claiming that everything she does it so impeccably:

“Now I am thinking of a girl whom I met in a party in Paris years ago.. she is my Facebook friend...and her Facebook profile is like an impeccable control of her social life...she has complete control over what is happening...everything is coherent, all stylish pictures...there is nothing funny...its so perfect that I wonder like ´how she does it´?!!”

In this comment we see Kantian aesthetic where the consumption (or at least the social presentation) of lifestyle is seen as elite, perfect, and subtle and detached, which makes the respondent wonder ´how she does it´!. Later in the discussion she also comments ´I wish I could manage my Facebook profile the way she does´, which makes it obvious that she characterizes her friend to be on a relatively higher stage in cultural capital.

We extend Bourdieu´s ideas on High Culture Capital in Foucault´s post-structurist view of knowledge and Power, where knowledge claim, identity constructions and cultural representations as constituted in ideological systems, later enforced with power and routinized to become norms (1980, 1982; cited in Thompson & Tambyah, 1999). Thus ideologies organize the practices of everyday life are sustained in vast array of socioeconomic and cultural hierarchies (Thompson & Tambyah, 1999). Therefore, Beurdieu´s ´education´ in relation to Facebook culture is a construct of socially legitimate knowledge that gave our respondent to claim ´he is cheesy´, ´it was horrible´ and ´made me puke´. She also further claimed that ´we live in different worlds and may be its ok in a community he lives in´. This further elaborates on a point that virtual community culture has a separate ideological system that regards ´roses´ and ´candles´ as unintelligible whereas such symbols are seen as one of most romantic and acceptable expression of love in real-world.

4.3 I am available 24/7 - A highlight on micro-rituals

Under this theme, we would like to present descriptions of everyday Facebook consumption with development if habits. By taking Ekström´s example of habitual of smoking along with mundane consumptions (2010, p.60), we create an analogy to explain how they everyday activity of Facebook-ing is linked to other routine and mundane consumption practices of everyday life. We start the discussion with couple of quotes:
“Since morning I’ve opened my Facebook thrice.. In the morning while preparing breakfast I go thru Islamic updates from various pages that I’ve liked.. Around 10 am while preparing breakfast.”

“Used at 5 p.m. in my class from my phone while waiting for the teacher. Just scrolled around. At 7 pm while tea. Used on my pc. Scrolled around.”

Ekström (2010, e.d) in the ‘historical perspective of consumption´, highlights on how smoking developed from being meaningless to be an important activity; “they smoke at dinner tables, during meetings, in lifts and so on´ and ´would you like a cigarette´ becomes a standard conversation opener”, she highlights (p.60)

From the quotes of respondents above, Facebook consumption during classes, during work, while making breakfast, at friend’s place, at restaurants, while travelling in a bus and even simultaneously during the activities of making breakfast, having tea, doing office work and so on, it becomes an important activity. Ekström highlights that even though rituals are opposites to routines, a repetitive behaviour of smoking as conversational opener during dinners and so on have turned it into a micro-ritual (p.61). In a similar fashion, Facebook consumption during different instances, places and situations by acts of commenting, liking, sharing, and checking-up have turned it into a micro-ritual way of consumption. Facebooking, like smoking is an activity which can be done anytime, almost anywhere and one does not require the specific context or a situation. Clicking a button on mobile phone is as easier as lighting a cigar, takes the consumer to a separate world of experiences. We will see few more quotes to further develop this idea:

“Again nothing worth discussing, normal posts, normal people, I didn’t feel anything special, I was like “hmm ,cool”, and smiled at some pictures, I didn’t feel annoyed or happy at all. It’s kind of emotionless... sometimes I feel nothing better to do, then just log on Facebook to kill sometime, maybe it’s better than sitting on the chair and counting time passing by?”

“the conversations on Facebook are pointless without context, you have to be there to know it... when we talk about something that happened on Facebook and I ask them 'ohh that’s interesting...what happened’ and then they start telling me about it and at some point they say ‘well...that wasn’t really interesting, it was just Facebook bullcrap!’”

Just as these two accounts present the pointlessness of Facebook activity, the need to be there to know it, and the emotionless-ness this the activity generate in response, Klien points out
that ‘smoking a cigarette’, it is ‘soul-less’, and it is basically doing nothing but instead the experiences during its consumption mean different for different people, like a way to calm down, or rewarding oneself (1993, cited in Ekrström 2010, p.61). Similarly, the conversations on Facebook, as a non-user highlights are ‘bullcrap’. He further highlights that even the users know I: it is emotionless. The context and the personal intensions and meanings during the process of its consumption matter significantly.

We want to take it forward as an attempt to understand Facebook from a community perspective. We aim to question whether too much consumption, combined with emotionlessness and brainlessness create any negative consequences among the community members:

“Sometimes I feel due to Facebook the peace in life of seeing what's happening around n enjoying some minutes to yourself have gone…”

The above quote from respondent highlights the overuse of Facebook to be a consequence for lack of peace in real life. We understood that several respondents use it every time, mostly as 24/7 activity due to Facebook messenger, but they also acknowledge the feelings of regret, the loss of appreciation of time and uselessness of activities on Facebook. Another important element that emerged out of non-users (especially from quitter) and infrequent users was the concern of privacy and lack of control they have on the usage (more like an addiction). The quote below highlights this point:

“And but I think it is to get tricked, just sitting there and learn what other people are posting but it is not that interesting” I know that I need to go in Facebook and check, I don’t want to have it coming to me when I don’t want to check it, because it can take your attention from other stuff, like studies or work.”

The notions behind ‘getting tricked’ and ‘have it coming to me’ signifies the lack of control over one’s activities. But does and can it happen in a ‘community’ that participants feel lack of control over what they do, even if they realize it? And actually who has or can have a control in the community structure where everybody is nothing but only a participant. These questions raise concerns over the ‘nature of community’ and present of any ‘marketplace’ that determine the acts of community members. As previously in first theme we raised questions of Gemeinschaft and Gesellscaft and the actual placement between the two, we aim to lead this argument further in the ‘discussions ’ chapter.
5.0 Facebook as a Space

5.1 Escaping to a New Culture

In this chapter, we aim to build our understandings on purposes of Facebook consumption. In her accounts of historical developments of consumption, Eskröm gives the classic example of development on smoking as a consumption activity (2010, p.60-62). As the act of smoking (as a process) have a different meaning to every smoker, our accounts of Facebook also maintain that it is an activity that is useless out of the context. Like smoking, one has to be in it to know it. From this, we develop our point on ´what is it that make Facebook consumption interesting, and to some extent like smoking, addictive´? As per a quote from respondent:

“I check Facebook first in the morning when I wake up, even before get out of bed, and I have Facebook basically often as a tab on my computer open, just to take a break from studying or something and check it every once in a while, and also in the night I also check it, like last minute of the night”

The quote above presents the repetitive activity or a routine that a Facebook consumer follows. She summarizes most of the respondent’s comments on their consumption: opening it in the morning, taking a break from study, and checking it before sleeping. However, there were different reasons for consuming it on different timings. Many respondents quoted Facebook consumption in morning as a newspaper or email (checking newsfeed and responding to messages and notification), in the afternoons it is for commenting on posts and sometimes postings (posting and liking/commenting), in evenings for socializing (through one-on-one inbox/wall posts talks), and again in the night as a social updater (checking at 12 a:m if somebody´s birthday etc.). Based on these accounts, we understand what kind of social updates and socializing opportunities, or in short the experiences, Facebook consumption provides.

John Urray´s (1990; cited in Corrigan 1997, p.132) work on tourist´s literature is interesting in this context. He highlights that time, space and culture are the three distinguished notions that create an escape from everyday life and create attraction for a tourist. Time relates to going to history, as it takes tourists to an extraordinary and uncommon place that is distinct from their everyday routine. Space, similarly provides a distinguished place that has nature and beauty and an authentic ´community´ aspect in the fast-paced life of factories, traffic, pollution. We are more interested in the third aspect of culture, which Corrigan mentions is imbedded in history and nature. Corrigan gives an example that even though ´mining and
fishing’ are activities related to nature, if the weather is harsh, warmth of people can make all the difference (Corrigan 1997, p.135). Similarly in a harsh reality of working from morning till evening, studying for exams, preparing routine breakfast, travelling in the same bus every day, Facebook provides the cultural escape to a different place, where one has friends, family, pictures as a reminder of good times, hopes and plans for an after-exam party and so on. But how is it possible to escape to a new place without physically being there, unlike a tourist? The answer is in postmodern consumer accounts: with the help of media consumption and immersion in endless hyperreal simulations of signs and symbols, one can escape to a different culture. Zygmunt Bauman (1996; cited in Thompson & Tambyah, 1999) writes that tourism is no longer a practice of going on an official vacations or a holiday, but one should be a tourist every day and anywhere (p.23). Bauman´s accounts however, are based on the idea of traditional media, brands, and consumption of symbol in order to turn routine into a continuous holiday. We add to this theory where a virtual community like Facebook provides a whole different world of not only simulations, and symbols, but also with a combination of friends and family present all the time to provide support, warmth, help and closeness. And for this, a tourist doesn’t even have to pay, all comes free.

To elaborate further on instances and reasons for such escapes to Facebook community, the quote presented above mentions ‘taking a break for study’ to relax, using it in mornings “in the bed as an alarm clock”, or even as a “newspaper”. The respondent also quotes that it helps her wake up in the morning. Therefore, relaxation and using it as a newspaper are two completely different contexts. While relaxation could mean getting into the space for warmth from friends and have a good time, what does the newspaper does? Surely not to give historical updates (like Urray´s ideas on time as history in tourism), but rather what is happening in the current world of friends and what is supposedly going to happen (an event or a party). Therefore, we extend the idea of this type of community for a ‘tourist’ by departing from Urray´s ideas where he suggests: ‘history seems to be a convenient way of turning an otherwise uninteresting town into an object fit for the gaze of tourists´ (cited in Corrigan, 1997, p.136). But in case of Facebook consumption, it is the ‘present’ and the ‘future´ that make an interesting place for an escape. The desire to know what is happening around the world and especially in social circle makes Facebook a different type of escape.

Moreover, as Corrigan also suggests, time and space does not and should not necessarily be seen as interlinked, but rather as two different things. A quote from respondent highlights:
“Woke up early morning, about 3:30 a.m., tried to sleep again but couldn't, grabbed my phone and opened the already logged-in Facebook.”

Although this example does not highlight what respondent did on Facebook, it provides enough evidence that Facebook consumption is used as a place to escape the awkwardness of waking up in the middle of sleep and inability to sleep. Facebook, provided a place where she could go to, something she could rely on. Making an analogy to a previous quote where Facebook helps in make a person wake-up in the morning, here Facebook is helping her in going back to sleep. Another quote from the same respondent gives a different dimension:

“Went through newsfeed and found out through best friend's status that she was feeling horrible. Hence asked her to talk to me on what's app!”

Here, we see that Facebook consumption is an escape to look for warmth and closeness, whereas she was there to provide that warmth. Therefore, when real life is hard and problematic, the community aspect, the thought of friends on Facebook make things better. Corrigan highlight’s history and nature to be two most prominent dimensions for a tourist escape, whereas in this new and digital community of Facebook, cultural aspect seems to be the most prominent reason for an escape.

But do all ‘tourists’ get equal warmth and friendliness? Can the community and its people be harsh to some and friendly to others in any way? We take this discussion forward with the continuation of the previous quote:

“Skimmed through newsfeed, came across the fact that she wasn’t the only one feeling blue, a couple of other friends also shared gloomy statuses, God knows why, never inquired was most interested in my best friend.”

This quote highlights that this warmth from friends is also relevant to physical closeness and friendship with a friend in real life. These circles of friends within Facebook ‘friends’ will be discussed in detail the last chapter. In the next theme we are interested in understanding how that the posts with specific connotations of good and bad, like ‘feeling horrible’ or ‘feeling awesome’ would appear to a Facebook consumer.

5.2 You Post Too Much: The acts of being conspicuous:

The act of postings of pictures, photos, statuses and articles is very strongly linked to how consumers of such posts make judgments about one’s personalities. We begin this theme with Veblen’s Theory of Leisure class (1899, cited in Corrigan 1997, p.21-24) where ones social
honour, social prestige and social status is based on his ‘wealth’, and if one possesses possess wealth and desires social honour, one must demonstrate it. In a culture of Facebook, participants demonstrate such wealth (material, intellectual and social) though the acts of posting statuses, photos and so on. These posts are about various things, like a car one buys, goes to an expensive restaurant, and gets a new job, travelling to some country etc. also, there are other kinds of wealth like showing political opinions, advising others and so on. We understand these posts under Veblen’s ideas on display of wealth, in terms of Facebook posts. A respondent quotes:

“it’s a sort of the life stage, you can clearly tell that now our age group is moving to there, people are getting married, getting engaged, getting babies, it really happened quickly on Facebook because I have been on Facebook since 2007 or something, and it started one and a half year ago that my friend were starting to get kid and married, especially engagement, it got really quickly that it started happening.”

As per a respondent, these kinds of posts on getting married, getting job helps her understand movements within her age group, career stages, life-stages etc. these posts further are away to compare her growth in life-stage with that of her friends-group. So how it is that one sees such movements, compare oneself with friends but these comparisons does not affect? What kind of social comparisons we are talking about and how they make others feel?

But also I think, too much of anything, if someone posts 500 vacation pics or too many pics of “of I have a boyfriend now” or whatever, too many of something that continues to be the same, then it’s like “ok, it’s enough now”,

Therefore, as Veblen’s ideas for wealthy class were to demonstrate the wealth through conspicuous consumption, on Facebook community, demonstrating too much of your wealth comes out to be as showing off; for Facebook community participants, one that demonstrates too much is regarded as conspicuous.

“yeah of course…like now I am looking for job I guess if lots of people posting ohh yeah I got a job and this and that….than I would get may be a bit jealous, not sad but jealous…that yeah I need to find one too...”

Jealousy is one feeling that arises out of these social comparisons. We also noticed similar examples where Facebook consumers do not like seeing what they don’t have, like having a job, going on a vacation and so on. There are also some cases where such posts bring in annoyance, sadness and a reflection of self in comparison to others. Not only was this
annoyance for social comparisons, but also in interesting cases like sharing of sad or bad news. As per a respondent:

“But when I think when it’s bad stuff, it has to be like extremely bad stuff that you post on Facebook, then those might get a lot of comments or something, those people who just post like oh I had a bad day, like mild bad stuff, it seems like they are just complaining, it’s like why are you sharing this?”

Therefore, lack of wealth which could be loss of job, having a bad day, or even some relative dying also attract some attention, some warmth. But the degree to such warmth matters the most to its consumer. In the quote above, where mild bad stuff is shown as sign on being naïve, extremely bad stuff like loss of a relative may be seen as an acceptable norm of looking for warmth. Therefore, answering to Veblen’s question: “how does one demonstrate that one has wealth so all can see and admire?” (p.21) The answer: is not to be conspicuous in terms of sharing good posts, and be conspicuous in sharing bad posts. In short, show wealth in a subtle way and show lack of wealth in a conspicuous way! We end this discussion on an interesting quote that summarizes the concept:

“I think I can see a correlation amongst my friends that people that are living interesting lives, according to me, they post less, and the ones that are living really, working in a factory back home, I’m not gonna sound critical like that, but I don’t mean to, they post a lot, they are the ones that post pictures that they are out fishing or when they had a kid or they are sitting drinking with friends at night, so If you have a more interesting life, the less you actually share it, that’s how I feel in my personal view, that’s the feeling I have”
**6.0 Facebook as a Stage**

The conspicuous and not-so-conspicuous consumption practices or displays, and their effects on social comparisons, based on community aspects of ‘friend’, sets grounds for considering Goffman’s and McCannell’s ideas relating such displays to a stage (1972 & 1973; cited in Corrigan 1997, p-137-142). Facebook can be seen as a stage which, like all other ones, consists of two sub-stages: front stage and back stage. On the front stage, people are dressed up and performing or acting in front all their audiences, and on the back stage, people take off their make-up, costumes and return to who they are in real. However, as the difference between these two stages might be huge (600-1200 Facebook friends), the audience who can only get access to the front stage might start to ask the question “what do they look like in the back stage?” As argued by Corrigan (1997, p.137), individuals in societies who are “dominated by bureaucracies and complex organizations feel their lives are shallow and their experiences are inauthentic”. On Facebook, some people also have had experiences where they have felt what they have seen on Facebook is not real, they have been left with nothing worthwhile, nothing real (Corrigan, 1997, p.137). In this chapter, we will use the back stage and front stage theory as well as the six-stage theory to analyze the usage of Facebook from a consumption perspective.

In addition, apart from the theories mentioned above, in this chapter we will also link the Facebook consumption to the concept of hyperreallity, to understand the role of images, narratives and symbols that are building blocks of this community’s existence. As pointed out by Baudrillard (2001, cited in Thiry-Cherques, 2010), hyperreality is the virtual reality in which we live, it is structured by information and technology, and it is “sustained on an amalgamation of elements which were previously separate, such as production and consumption” (p.2). On Facebook as a virtual community, people can only sense, perceive or interpret what they see on it, therefore, it’s hard to tell what is real or what is not real. Moreover, as Facebook is a virtual community, the community members do not interact in real lives in most cases, perceptions and interpretations based on the posts are most often the only means to judge how real their Facebook world is.

**6.1 Who is My Audience? The Extended Exposure**

On Facebook, front stage is a public place where people are, by posting their pictures, status or articles, consciously building and managing a public image of their selves. A person, in his role of Facebook user by posting or updating their own picture or profiles, can be regarded as
an actor, who performs on Facebook as a front stage to hundreds or thousands of their Facebook friends in order to extend their social exposure, as two respondents mentioned:

“Maybe she wants people to know more about her? I mean, she is not a very social person in real life, maybe she wants to show her social side on Facebook? And maybe she wants more attention from other people? I really don’t know, I can only guess.”

“Good news is positive to your image, and I would be more likely to share good news than bad news”.

It can be seen that Facebook is used and viewed as a public place where people can customize their personal image by consciously choosing which of their public performances they want to show on it. As Boyd & Ellison (2008, p.211) defines social network sites as “web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system”, Facebook is both a public and semi-public place in a sense that Facebook users can choose what to put on it, how much of what they put can be public. In short, they select their audience. Therefore, on the front stage of Facebook, people can choose to dress up and show the best parts of their lives.

6.2 Hidden Secrets

However, there are always differences between the public performances on the front stage that you see, but not everyone can be what goes on behind that stage. As pointed out by Corrigan (1997, p.137), the distinction between the front and back regions of any public performance can be seen as the front stage and the back stage, “it’s a search for a full deep life rather than a shallow one, for authenticity rather than inauthenticity.”(Corrigan, 1997, p.137). As on Facebook, people also tend to search for what’s behind their friends’ posts, people want to know if what their friends post really reflect their real lives. “The front stage is seen as appearance and the back stage as reality” (Corrigan, 1997, p.138). As two respondents said:

“...but I think people who are living a real life, they don’t have time to post everything on Facebook, so if someone posts too much, it gives the feeling that maybe their life is not so interesting in real! So when they post it on Facebook, they put a glitter on what their lives actually are...so if they post regularly, and all happy posts, then there is something wrong with them too…”

“Yes, I think on Facebook, it’s easy to paint a pretty pic than real life, always often that you go have awesome lunch with your friends and you go travel over time but your normal life might not be that cool, sort of just taking the ‘best of the best as well as the best of the worst’, so they may not be
exaggerating, but you might not get the full picture because they are not showing the most of the day that are actually boring or stuff.”

This thought is supported by another respondent’s opinion in a similar way when being asked “do you think it is something that is actually going on in their lives...all happy moments...or it’s different than its Facebook statuses?”

“For some people maybe it is...for some it’s not! Maybe they kind of double the actual event, to make it more colourful and all...”

It can be argued that some of the respondents are very doubtful of the so-called happy posts, they know these posts do not necessarily reflect on people’ real lives, or least not the whole picture of their daily lives in general. In this sense, Facebook is viewed as a tourist spot, where the tourist attractions are the posts (images, narratives) each attracting the tourists to consumer its beauty. Corrigan argues that “tourism is a search for this reality that has been stolen” (Corrigan, 1997, p.137). However, people may not intentionally “steal” when it comes to Facebook, but they do intentionally ´choose this reality´, which often turns out to be the good side of their life, and therefore turning this ´reality´ into ´staged reality´. As a respondent mentions:

“you know, that thing; it’s not more beautiful, it’s more like selecting what you want to show. I know a couple of girls who have really big foreheads, and they have a system, when they take profile pictures, they always take the photo or cut the photo so that you don’t see their forehead, every time, I know two girls, one since I was a kid, and another girl for six or seven years now, if you go through their profile pictures back in time, every single photo is cut so their forehead looks shorter, that’s talking about showing selected ....so they are very selective in. I mean, you can say that people are not that fake, you always try to show off, it’s the same thing, if they have big boobs, they want to show off, it’s all about, you know”

As Corrigan (1997) argues, “if you actually knew what was going on in the restaurant, you might quickly lose your appetite” (p.137). The same analogy applies, if these two girls knew the viewer is actually aware that they crop their photo, then their attempts to build a good image of themselves on Facebook would be totally ruined; Facebook to them wouldn’t be a good stage anymore.

This phenomenon where people (organizers of tourism events in Corrigan’s case) hide all “sorts of props and activities that might discredit the performance out front” are viewed by Corrigan as distinctions between the back stage and the front stage (Corrigan, 1997, p.137).
On Facebook, front stage could be a dressed-up person posting a drinking picture in a fancy place or a picture of a dinner in a well-decorated restaurant with his or her partner. The corresponding back stage could then be the real life that person is living in general apart of those fancy moments, a real feeling that person had when he or she was having that party or that dinner in that occasion, etc. Facebook consumers are trying to judge the authenticity behind those posts the same way as tourists want to experience the authenticity that locals in the tourist spot have.

6.3 Front or Back?
However, it may not be easy to tell the back stage by just reading a particular drinking picture or happy status, therefore, people also try to get to the back stage of a person by reflecting on his or her real life, as two respondents said:

“exactly, I mean, I think it’s a normal thing, I mean, if some of my close friends say something stupid, which we do very often, I don’t think they are that stupid because I know what kind of person he or she is in most time of his or her life, but if it would be an opposite situation, the result would be totally different then.”

In this case, it’s totally different from what Corrigan describes in the example of tourism. In Corrigan’s case, tourists travel to a tourist spot which most of them may have never been to before, therefore, there is no such thing from their own experience that they can reflect on in order to judge if it’s a front stage or back stage. However, when it comes to Facebook, most people may, more or less, have seen their Facebook friends in real life, so when they see any person posting any picture and status on Facebook and if they want to search for the back stage of that picture or status, they can always choose to reflect on that person’s real life experiences with them, to see if it matches that. As in this example given above, the respondent had some of his close friends who may have said something stupid on Facebook, but as he knew them so that he wouldn’t think them as stupid as compared to those ones he hardly knew in his real life.

The distinction between the front stage and back stage used here is from Goffman’s theory of front and back region, where the front stage is any public performance and the back stage is where “all sorts of ’props and activities that might discredit the performance out front’ are hidden. Nevertheless, according to Baudrillard (1976; cited in Mendoza, 2010 p.45), the contemporary culture and society has come to the point in which the real has disappeared and is replaced by models “more real than the real” or ‘hyperreal’. In this sense, Goffman’s back
stage may not necessarily be the only authenticity that exits on Facebook; detailed discussion is given in the later themes.

6.4 Meaningless Backstage?
Nevertheless, a question still remained after all is that “do people always want to search for the back stage of Facebook?” The answer is not an easy yes. Facebook consumers equally enjoy the front stage performances many times without making any efforts to look for reality. For instance, when being asking about the showing-off posts, two respondents mentioned:

“I mean, some people do it (showing off) in this way and some people do it in another way, it’s fine, as long as I understand and as long as it’s not spamming, I will be totally fine. I mean, people show off on Facebook anyway, everyone wants to show the good side of themselves on Facebook, or in any other publics places, It’s natural, it’s good actually.”

“But isn’t that (showing off) what it is for on Facebook?”

It can be seen that these two respondents seemed to just enjoy the showing-off side of the posts they saw without bothering to ask themselves the question, “what is actually hidden behind those showing-off posts”. As argued by Corrigan (1977, p.138), there is also a possibility that some might quite enjoy the “front stage only aspects of the tour, having no interests at all in the authenticity of backstage regions”. Just like those tourists who are totally satisfied with the front stage views they can get while consciously knowing that they are just so-called appearance of the tourist spot, some Facebook users also just choose to enjoy the front stage performance while knowing the fact that people may live a different life form what they post.

6.5 Am I at Backstage?
Another interesting perspective we found is that one respondent also expressed his concern about the authenticity that people may regard as the back stage. He said:

“It’s good that you think if people are actually living as well as their posts may show, I mean, some of your friends that you are really familiar with, you can tell it in a second or so that if what they posted matches their real life, some of the friends you are not familiar with or you don’t even know at all, then it’s super hard for you to tell………but after all, even if it’s a very close friend of yours who posted something, you thought, ‘oh, he did this, this matches his personality and his real life, this post is real’, I mean, even you think it this way, but you still can’t be sure right?, he might fake it as well, you never know”.

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Therefore, even if a post forms a friend that you are very close to appears to be backstage, there is still not an easy way to tell if it’s a real backstage or if it’s just a deeper level of a front stage. As added by Corrigan (1997, p.139), visitors have no “real way of knowing if they have seen the real back stage or one assembled specifically for the tourist”. The same thing goes with Facebook users, how sure a Facebook user can be about the back stage of a post may largely depend on how well he or she knows the person who posted it in real life. Therefore, they authenticity or reality behind the hyperreal is completely depending on the knowledge about the real-lives of these Facebook actors.

In addition, as Barry (1997, cited in Hosterman, 2010) argues, the virtual world is “an interpretation of reality but not reality itself” (38). On Facebook, when people see a friend’s picture or post, they may start to interpret it in a way that they can link the post or picture to that friend’s real life. In this case, Goffman’s back stage might be the real life that person is living or the true feeling that person had when he posted his picture. However, according to Hosterman (2010), a reality might merely be a selective, perceptual process based on how a person sees, hear, touch, smell etc. Therefore, it can be argued that in virtual community like Facebook, a reality may not only be a person’s real life behind his/her post, but a reality could also be how people perceive and interpret his/her posts. These two kinds of reality might be the same in some case, but they might differ greatly in some cases as well.

6.6 So where is the Reality?
According to Firat and Venkatesh (1995), the postmodern critique enables us to consider that hyperreality is more plausible than reality as it treats the human subject “not as a centered, unified subject, but as decentered and fragmented” (p.245). Therefore, by taking the concept of hyperreality into account, it can be argued that, some of Facebook users may turn “front stage” to “back stage” where they may claim their authenticity ultimately lay upon. As one respondent said:

“No I am thinking of a girl whom I met in a party in Paris years ago, we don’t know each other, don’t talk to each other...but she is my Facebook friend...and her Facebook profile is like an impeccable control of her social life...she has complete control over what is happening...everything is coherent, all stylish pictures...there is nothing funny. And you look at her Facebook and everything is like that. And she works in marketing, and it is quite obvious...it’s so perfect that I wonder like ‘how she does it’”
In this case, according to the respondent, this girl on her Facebook has a “complete control” over her image, and it looks to the respondent that this girl is so “perfect” and “coherent”, “nothing is funny”, although she doesn’t know this girl and they don’t know even talk. In this sense, even if the respondent doesn’t know anything about this girl’s real life, her Facebook image still creates a hyperreality that makes the respondent believe what this girl appears to be on her Facebook is authentic regardless of how she might be in her real life. This hyperreality in this case seems more authentic, more believable and reliable indicator of real life.

We live in a world “that is a continuous making of the present, especially through electronic media” (Vattimo, 1992; cited in Firat & Venkatesh 1995, p.252). What we experience mentally or momentarily becomes the reality, and the “construction of this condition and its intensification constitute the hyper-real” (p.252). On Facebook, it can also be seen that sometimes people tend to believe what they see on Facebook might be more real than what they know about that person in his or her real life; or a picture showing only a moment of that person’s life might be perceived as more real than his or her real life in a way that the picture is at least real in that certain moment.

6.7 A Tourist’s Walk: The six stages of Facebook
As MacCannell (1973, cited in Corrigan 1997, p.139-142) proposes a six-point model of stages in tourist settings, we found that the respondents’ experiences on Facebook also fit in these six categories: as two respondents said:

“……it’s not really real….Facebook therefore is more superficial and fake”

“I would say Facebook is like a low kind of interaction, it can be a starting point. Skype is deeper as it’s good to hear someone voice even though it’s not completely personal.”

“For close friends and family, I don’t need Facebook…I usually Skype my family, I see my friends very often in real. Facebook for me is more like putting up pictures of party last night and all…”

According to MacCannell, Stage 1 is Goffman’s front region, which tourists are trying to get beyond. During the interviews, there we comments on trying to get rid of the so-called “Facebook superficiality” by taking the conversation on Facebook to some other platforms such as Skype or phone calls, where they think are better or are perceived better for deeper and more meaningful conversation. Similar to tourists who, on stage 1, try to get beyond, some Facebook users are also trying to avoid being staying in this stage.
Stage 2 is “a touristic front region that has been decorated to appear, in some of its particulars, like a back region” (Corrigan, 1997, p.139), as one respondent quoted in stage 1 further mentioned:

“I would say Facebook is like a low kind of interaction, it can be a starting point..... but on Facebook I have this inner circle with whom I interact every day, I Skype with them too...and I have friends who I talk to on Facebook and I see them in class too...”

Therefore, we can see that even Facebook is perceived by him as “a low kind of interaction”, he still has an “inner circle” where he interacts with his friends every day. This feature of the “inner circle” can be viewed as the decoration attached to stage 1 in order to remind people a part of the “authenticity” that might be hidden in the back stage. This stage may be compared with the stage 1 as they are both still front stages but with some decoration to remind people of the back stage (Corrigan, 1997, p.134).

Stage 3 is “a front region that is totally organized to look like a back region” (Corrigan, 1997, p.139). We quote the same example of ‘cropping foreheads from photos’:

“......I know a couple of girls who have really big foreheads, and they have a system, when they take profile pictures, they always take the photo or cut the photo so that you don’t see their forehead, every time, I know two girls, one since I was a kid, and another girl for six or seven years now, if you go through their profile pictures back in time, every single photo is cut so their forehead looks shorter....”

In this case, this girl always tries to take pictures of herself without showing her forehead as she might think her forehead is too big. However, she didn’t do it only once or twice, to continually enforce this altered reality to be the reality, or an ‘ultimate truth. Therefore, it is an organized, repetitive behaviour to create an illusion to people that this (her personal image) might be a back stage.

Stage 4 is “a back region that is open to outsiders” (Corrigan 1997, p.139). It as only a part of the real back stage that is just enough to give the tourists a limited insight without exposing the real back stage. A quote from a respondent highlights:

“Went through newsfeed and found out through best friend's status that she was feeling horrible. Hence asked her to talk to me on what’s app! Skimmed through newsfeed, came across the fact that she wasn't the only one feeling blue, a couple of other friends also shared gloomy statuses, God knows why, never inquired was most interested in my best friend.”
This sharing of ‘gloomy’ status of a friend made the respondents contact here. It is interesting how just by looking at her status she understood that it is something serious in her life that is a real back stage for us. While some tourists like this respondent see it as a window to backstage (later ends up talking to her on WhatsApp), the same person does not seem to be interested in other gloomy statuses. Therefore, it seems like even though majority of friends may open some part of backstage for their friends (tourists), it is completely upon the discretion of the tourists to visit it or not.

Stage 5 is “a back region that may be cleaned up or altered a bit because tourists are permitted an occasional glimpse in” (Corrigan 1997, p.140). Here, one account from a respondent sheds some light:

“Yeye, I’m going to add something too, stomach flu, stomach flu is one of those things people tend to tell their friends on social media about, usually try to tell it in a funny way like, oh I just found out diet plan or best diet trick ever, I just had stomach flu last night, and I couldn’t sleep and puke, you know, they are trying to make something funny out of it, I think certain negative things have become more acceptable to share somehow”

In some occasions on Facebook, some people may not intentionally attempt to build a better image of themselves than what they seem to be in real life. However, for some reason, they may still try to alter things a bit that do not originally look or sound very nice and then post them on Facebook. In the sense, it’s an “authenticity” that has been “cleaned up or altered” (Corrigan, 1997, p.134).

Stage 6 is “Goffman's back region; the kind of social space that motivates touristic consciousness (Corrigan, 1997, p.134), as one interview mentioned:

“She has complete control over what is happening…everything is coherent, all stylish pictures…there is nothing funny and you look at her Facebook and everything is like that”

As in this case, the respondent thinks what this girl posts on her Facebook is “coherent” and “everything is like that”. This girl may or may not, have exactly the same life as what it appears to be on Facebook. However, it appears to the interviewee that this is coherent and authentic and believable. However, as the respondent also further mentioned:

“she is not very close to me so I can’t really judge or know if she is like that in real or not...but her Facebook profiles gives an impression of a smart, intelligent, impeccable, involved girl...”
She couldn’t know if what that girl appeared to be on Facebook was how she really was in real life because she was not very close to that girl, although she thought everything that girl posted on her wall was coherent and “everything was like it”. In this sense, in order to get to the stage 6, a Facebook tourist might want to explore who actually knows the most of a person both on and off Facebook, the answer then might be that person’s family or siblings who spend most of time with him or her and are also friends of him or her on Facebook.

However, as we found out in the interviews, most people don’t want to add their relatives or family on Facebook, as two of them said:

“For my family, no….they are not very active on Facebook….I add them to be politically correct, but I don’t want to interact with them…I don’t always want to show them what I am up to. I am not too happy with them seeing my wasted party pictures, even though I am old enough but still they are my parents….I am careful when I post. But if someone tags me, you have to either remove or let them see…I Skype with them so it’s not really important to contact on Facebook….I tell them what I want to tell them.”

Therefore, it can be seen that some people don’t really want to add their family on Facebook as they are generally afraid their family because their families know the ´real them´. this may not only affect the staged acts or performance but would also hinder their Facebook identity. Therefore, Goffman’s stage 6 controlled by the Facebook users in an efforts to maintain hyperreal stage. But what happens when someone tries to be authentic on Facebook?

Respondents argued that Facebook, as a stage for public performance, is for people to show the good side of their lives. Sometimes sad news or bad things that reflect their real lives are not even appreciated on Facebook, even though those bad or sad things reveal peoples’ real lives, consumers are unwilling to consume them and regard that they should be kept to back stage only. As one respondent comments:

“Yes. And there are also a significant number of people who start crying about their problems on Facebook for sympathy. I'm not the kind of person who is interested in sad things”.

“Sometimes it affects me as well, I mean, it’s your shit, you take care of it, you don’t have to make everyone feel negative, right? And sometimes we are doing the same thing or in the same phrase of life, like writing thesis, trying to find a job, trying to find a partner, stuff, if you complain about them which I’m also kind of concerned at the moment, it of course affects me somehow as well, so in this
sense you just passed the negativity to me, of course it’s annoying and it’s unnecessary, I don’t have to get that shit from you”.

It can be seen that for Facebook is not a place for sad things and negativity, or authenticity, rather, it is a place good things and positivity. Even though those sad or bad things are authentic and may truly reflect one’s real life, or at least give a bigger and more reliable and authentic picture, a Facebook consumer is not interesting in knowing about it. Therefore, we conclude that neither everything is authentic, not there is any motivation among respondents to get to authentic experiences.
7.0 Discussion
In efforts to answer of our research question, we found that Facebook consumption takes place through several ways: rituals of liking, commenting, ignoring, helping, exchanging, bonding, and displaying the identities to name a few. We further understood how these rituals, norms and acts, along coupled with their strong symbolic meanings continue to develop an individual identity, which is perceived and even judged by others. Under different themes in the analysis, we understood how daily routine activity of Facebook is turned to a micro-ritual of consumption, a space, a different world of consumption of colourful images, fantasies, experiences and narratives which turn Facebook into an interesting cultural milieu. We looked at how the cultural aspects of Facebook have been turned to a tourist escape by its consumers, where consumers in a tourist setting look for warmth, closeness, reliance and friendliness within Facebook culture. We analysed that Facebook culture is a multidimensional space, where consumers, at their own will, turn it into a newspaper, a social updater, and a tool for identity creation. Lastly, we also understood the endless hyperreal simulations on Facebook that take a consumer to a distinct fantasy world of images, signs, and symbols, emoticons where consumer has a choice to act and entertain himself as he pleases.

By answering our research question, we have made contributions into CCT theory of consumer identity projects and marketplace. We discuss this under two broader themes:

7.1 Facebook: A Twisted Community
Facebook as a community has a significant place in the postmodern consumer culture. With the multidimensionality of Facebook in terms of signs, symbols, emoticons, images, narratives etc. along with a very strong communal aspect of ‘friends’, turns it into an interesting amalgamation of community and marketplace. Where marketplace dimension of Facebook has extensive, but market-decided symbols and signs, role(s) of individuals in relation to social circle of friends create strong bonds of community ties and affiliations. Therefore, we refer to this as a ‘twisted community’, with an extensive network of friends and enormous opportunities for construction of multiple identities. We therefore, refer Facebook as a place for consumption of everything: ideas, narratives, stories to even signs and symbols, experiences, social bonds and so on. Every time a consumers logs into Facebook, they enters into the world of consumption, a marketplace full colour, glitter and symbols. Unlike any contemporary market, this one is set by one’s own community members and one has the choice of preferring one member over other, consuming his goods (as
valuable experiences) for free while bartering with others. This new form of community empowers a consumer to make selective choices in goods while maintaining social bonds with all participants.

Drawing upon the rituals of exchange, our research contributes to Malinowski, Mauss and Levis-Strauss´s theory of ritualistic exchange (cited in Komter, 1996) as a moral obligation (´do ut des´) by emphasizing that in Facebook community, a consumer is empowered to completely deny this moral obligation. A consumer can do that by acts like not consuming anything from a friend and even blocking him/her from newsfeed. It is a postmodern market-based community where there is an acceptable norm of maintaining relationship with some, ignoring the rest. Therefore, contrary to small-preindustrial Gemeinschaft community where everybody knows everybody else, Facebook is a post-modern Gemeinschaft where one is liberated from forced relationship maintenance and interaction while living ´within´, even expanding that community. Facebook therefore is an amalgamation of a community and marketplace where participation, moral obligations and social bonding are completely in member’s control.

Moreover, with an escape from routines of real-life on fingertips, Facebook culture is a space for consumption of experiences. Extending form Urry and Bauman´s (1995, 1996; cited in Thomspson and Thambian, 1999) ideas on a postmodern tourist, Facebook community is a touristic wonderland, available 24/7 to serve its consumers. For a person tired of working in office or to a student wanting to take a break in class, this touristic land is filled with endless simulations with a slogan of ´here is a quick entertainment break in a wonderland...and you are not alone´ or ´your fiends wait for you....come take a virtual walk with them´, wanting to be explored.

Facebook culture therefore is an ideal example of a postmodern community with almost all the elements of postmodernity in a consumption culture; here, even the consumer. This consumer is an intelligent, sophisticated individual of today´s technological culture who is well aware of the differences between real/unreal, close/distant, private/public, authentic/unauthentic. By acting as a tourist and taking a walk in this marketplace, a consumer has an ability to see what is real, what is imaginary, what is flowery and glittery, and even if he doesn’t have clear idea, he has no intention to know it in depth. It certainly is not a trap for him where he want to stay forever, rather it is nothing but a quick refreshing walk; as Bauman and Urry would call it, this consumer is an Eco-tourist. To an eco-tourist,
this glittery world of Facebook consumption doesn’t fool him, mainly because he is also a part of it.

7.2 A Prosumed-Consumer
In the efforts to have a refreshing walk in a touristic setting of Facebook and consuming at all the glitter and grandiose on display, a consumer is leaving as much traces of his identity narrative and image as those present ‘on display’. Consciously or unconsciously, he becomes nothing but a display himself.

A twisted community of Facebook is a marketplace where everything is created by its participants; a marketplace where ‘Facebook’ in itself stands nothing as a producer. Facebook in itself can be seen as ‘tabula rasa’, an empty slate where its well-established ‘what’s on your mind’ slogan invites users to post statuses, images, the stories, articles, videos, check-ins etc. Therefore, in efforts to consume Facebook, the users become the producers, and transform into prosumers.

Alvin Toffler, in her book The Third Wave, coined the term ‘prosumption’ and highlighted that Web 2.0 is an ideal place to see ‘how consumption completely collapses into presumption’ (1980, cited in Ritzer et al., 2012). Web 2.0 is all about User Generated Content (UGC) where users produce content to for others to consume and vice versa. Looking at the interesting dimensions of the type and value of the content Facebook prosumers prosume, it is solely based on experiences, entertainment, interactions that has very little meaning or material value if taken out of context.

Presumption, on more optimistic basis could be seen as amalgamation of the best of production and consumption where the producer of information gets to enjoy the power associated with being producer and the consumer enjoys the joys of being a consumer at his/her best possible environment Most of the prosumers quite enjoy their roles because the emotional and the material gains they seem to have (Chia, 2012; cited in Ritzer et al., 2012). In online prosumption it even become easier as neither the producer nor the consumer has to go out in a specific social or physical setting to prosume. Further, prosumption on Facebook should even be more interesting, because unlike any UGC, Facebook content is for ‘friends’ from ‘friends’, providing immense opportunities of virtual and real interactions and participations; gossiping can be seen as an attractive advantage. It turns out it is not so true in Facebook community. While producers may enjoy their individual acts of public display by posting photos, sharing articles, sharing a travelling story, consumers however may not be as
enthusiastic about its consumption. The examples as we have seen are rituals of ignoring, withholding or even mental cursing, feeling of annoyance, jealousy and so on. Therefore, we can see that in efforts to produce and consume these experiences, the consumers themselves are being consumed. Notice how liking, commenting, even ignoring has multiple meanings interpreted at different instances and contexts. Therefore, even the mere act of liking that may take a micro-second of a time, involves a lot of emotional labour. This psychic energy can be evident as ‘looking at a photo once or twice, thinking about it, interpreting the message out of it, relating it to whether it qualifies for a like or comment, or even later discussion about it with other friends in real or virtual setting’. Therefore, it is interesting to see the consumption of the consumer’s own energies, which turns him into a prosumer even while consuming something. This idea is paradoxical in nature- consumers consume Facebook but in the efforts of do so, they themselves are consumed, which turns them into prosumer. We end our discussion to a point to ponder: we now know to a great degree what and how do people consume when they consume Facebook. But did we also know how Facebook is consuming us?
8.0 Conclusions and Future Research
We understood Facebook in a broader cultural perspective of Facebook community by highlighting the solid associations of postmodernity in CCT domain. We did this by highlighting on importance of narratives, images and symbols on Facebook community as dominant aspects of consumer’s everyday life. By using literature from rituals, norms, conspicuous display and tourism, we attempted to draw conclusions on empowerment, liberation, and even willingness of Facebook consumers in this twisted community of today’s Technological Culture. We concluded Facebook as a distinguished form of Gesellschaft in the world of this Technological Culture, providing empowerment of choice, of participation and liberation. We also concluded Facebook as a cultural escape for the consumer of postmodern world. This escape turned consumer into an eco-tourist, willing and often happy to consume the Facebook aesthetics, but in an attempt to do so, becomes a prosumer.

The broad perspective of Facebook community culture in our research creates several possibilities for future research. Firstly, the attempt to explain Facebook as a twisted community gives a possibility for deeper understanding of its role as a marketplace. By this we mean understanding Facebook itself as a marketplace entity where there are possibilities of shopping, promoting brands, and even friends selling to friends, with their small private businesses, not to forget the advertisements that appear on Facebook. Secondly based on our accounts of ‘Facebook addiction’ and ‘brainless-ness’ of this activity, understanding the extent of empowerment for liberation and participation on this community gives a possibility for future research. This would further build into understanding the marketplace role of Facebook. Lastly, the interesting dimension of Facebook consumer’s turned to prosumers within the process of consumption provides a wide platform for future research on Facebook prosumption.
References


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## Appendix: Respondents Details

### Face-to Face Interviews*

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*Table 1: Participant Profiles (*=Pseudonyms)*