

**The Research Trends of Media and Nationalism in Digital Era:
In the Cases of Academic Journals “*National Identities*” and “*Nations and Nationalism*”**

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Abstract

After Benedict Anderson developed the concept of “Imagined Community” in 1983, thousands of researchers elaborated the concept and explored the relation between nationalism and media since then. However, the role of the transformation of communication technology, from print (e.g., book, novel, newspaper) and analog (e.g., radio, TV) to digital technology in the past three decades, was frequently underestimated in past researches. More importantly, in the Internet era, different type of media content (e.g., text, voice, image) could be transmitted to different media (e.g., computer, smartphone, tablet, digital TV) owing to the trend so called “media convergence”. Therefore, this study assumes that the meanings of the nationalism constructed by digital media are different than that by print and analog media. Through analyzing the two quarterly academic journals, “*National Identities*” and “*Nations and Nationalism*”, this study attempts to tease out the theoretical development and research trends in the field of nationalism in digital era.

“*National Identities*” and “*Nations and Nationalism*” are the few of the minority of academic journals which focus on the study of nationalism. They have been continuously publishing since 1999 and 1995 respectively in the UK. Many important nationalism researchers had their articles published in those journals like Anthony D. Smith and Ernest Gellner. In fact, both of the journals are the pioneer in the field of nationalism studies in the world. Therefore, this study tends to realize the research trends especially in the study of the relation between nationalism and digital media in the two journals. Furthermore, this study also intends to understand: (1) How many researches focus on digital media and nationalism in the two journals? (2) How do they do the research? (3) What are the characteristics of it and its studies?

1. Introduction and Research Questions

In the end of nineteenth century, a few of researchers already started to explore the relationship between media and the construction of national identity. In the article *Opinion and Conversation*, Gabriel Tarde (1898/1969) analyzed the characteristics of newspaper. He observed the growing nationalism has replaced decreasing loyalty in the modern Europe because of the circulating of newspapers. First, the influence of newspapers was limited within the audience who are speaking

same language, so that those people can communicate more conveniently. Actually, the border of nation tended to overlap with the distribution of language. On the other hand, the effective of newspapers triggered people to imagine their “simultaneity” and “mutual action”, then created an immense, abstract and sovereign crowd (pp. 306, 318).

Tarde’s article offers an insight into the relation between the print media and nationalism. The characteristic of “simultaneity” in media which John. B. Thompson (1995) called “the discovery of despatialized simultaneity”. Thompson pointed out the development of media technology broke the limit of time and space in transmitting messages. Especially the appearance of electronic media improved the phenomenon of space-time distanciation. Through media, people can experience the occurrence of specific events simultaneously no matter where they are. Furthermore, media creates common historical memories, experiences and feelings in different regions’ people.

In the past media and nationalism studies, the book “*Imagined Communities*” systematically and comprehensively discussed the mutual action among capitalism, print media and nationalism. In modern Europe, the development of capitalism improved the print media technology and offered the technical tool in constructing the imagined communities. For example, the author Benedict Anderson (1991) explained the characteristics of newspaper which included mass production, publishing in dialect languages, and non-durable product created extraordinary mass ceremony: “the almost precisely simultaneous consumption (‘imagined’) of the newspaper-as-fiction (p. 35).” People imagined there are thousands (millions) of people were reading the same newspaper simultaneously when they consumed the newspaper. The imagined mass ceremony created a community which shared experience and same language, then finally lead to a nationalism.

Electronic medias such as radio and television also trigger the consciousness of imagined world. Paddy Scannell (1996) pointed the ‘dailiness’ and ‘publicness’ of broadcasting. People can access to public affairs instantly through broadcasting. Radio and television offer daily service and 24-hour broadcasting programs. In addition, the broadcasting calendar regulates and assimilate into people’s everyday life. Especially the daily news and broadcasting calendar creates a public community and sharing certain public events and experiences. Furthermore, Mike Cormack (2000) thought the characteristics of broadcasting is a crucial element in our imaging of the world (p. 392).

However, the appearance of digital technology is bringing the revolution of communication. Different type of media content (e.g., text, voice, image) could be transmitted to different digital media facilities (e.g., computer, smartphone, tablet, television) through digital technology. The trend is called ‘media convergence’. Especially the invention of the Internet allows people to send and receive information all over the world. Therefore, compare to print and analog media, this study assumes that there are new meanings in the relationship between digital media and nationalism.

Through analyzing the two quarterly academic journals, “*National Identities*” and “*Nations and Nationalism*”, this study attempts to tease out the theoretical development and research trends in

digital media and nationalism studies. There are three research questions: (1) How many researches focus on digital media and nationalism in the two journals? (2) How do they do the research? (3) What are the characteristics of it and its studies?

2. Data Collecting

This study analyzes two quarterly journals— *National Identities* and *Nations and Nationalism*. Both journals focus on nationalism studies and publish in the United Kingdom. *National Identities* and *Nations and Nationalism* are continuing publishing since 1999 and 1995.

In methods, this study recognizes articles which relate to digital nationalism studies in two journals between 2000 and 2017. Although digital technology, especially the Internet, firstly emerged in 1960s, it was used in commerce in the end of 1980s. Then, the Internet became more popular after 1990s (Internet, n.d.). Therefore, this study arranged the data collecting time between 2000 to 2017.

First of all, this study recognizes articles according to their topic, abstract and method. Secondly, this study designs a set of keywords which relate to digital technology (media, satellite, digital, internet, online, web, phone, mobile) to search in detailed content. Third, if an article focuses on digital nationalism theory and phenomenon, or its materials are mainly collected from digital information, this study identifies the article as a digital nationalism study. Finally, in order to observe the rough trend in development of digital media and nationalism studies in the two journals, this study intends to identify the articles' research categories (empirical research/ theoretical research/ empirical and theoretical research) and research methods (qualitative research/ quantitative research/ mixed-methods research).

This study selects complete articles which include title, abstract, method, results and references to analyze. After excluded informal articles (e.g., editorial, issue information, book review, obituary, dialogue), the amount of articles is 924 (*National Identities*: 372; *Nations and Nationalism*: 552). After filtering those articles according to the aforementioned steps, 73 articles were identified as digital nationalism studies.

On the other hand, this study also teases out those digital nationalism studies in the two journals. That will answer the research questions more completely and explore the characteristics of digital nationalism and its research field.

3. Results

Although there are 73 articles were identified as digital nationalism studies in the two journals *National Identities* and *Nations and Nationalism*, the author finally selected 53 articles which mainly focuses on digital nationalism after deeply reviewing 73 articles.

In 53 articles, 23 (43.40%) of the articles come from *National Identities*, whereas 30 (56.60%) of the articles belong to *Nations and Nationalism*. Comparing the two journals, the number

of the studies in digital nationalism field is consistent with their article's publishing number. (40.26%, 59.74%) There are not polarization of the number of digital nationalism studies in the two journals.

After categorizing the two journals by research topic and method, in research topic, there are 21 (91.30%) empirical research, 1 (4.35%) theoretical research and 1 (4.35%) empirical and theoretical research in *National Identities*. In *Nations and Nationalism*, there are 27 (90.00%) empirical research, 1 (3.33%) theoretical research and 2 (6.67%) empirical and theoretical research. In sum, there are 48 (90.57%) empirical research, 3 (3.77%) theoretical research and 3 (3.77%) empirical and theoretical research in the two journals. The result shows that most articles focus on empirical research so that there are few studies intend to theoretically explore the relationship between digital communication technology and the construction of nationalism.

In method, there are 19 (82.60%) qualitative research, 2 (8.70%) quantitative research and 2 (8.70%) mixed-methods research in *National Identities*. On the other hand, there are 28 (93.33%) qualitative research, 1 (3.33%) quantitative research and 1 (3.33%) mixed-methods research in *Nations and Nationalism*. Combining the two journals, there are 47 (88.68%) qualitative research, 3 (5.66%) quantitative and 3 (5.66%) mixed-methods research in 53 articles. The result shows that most of the researchers in the articles prefer qualitative method to quantitative method.

Journal title	<i>National Identities</i>	<i>Nations and Nationalism.</i>	Total	
Research categories	Empirical research	21 (91.30%)	27 (90.00%)	48 (90.57%)
	Theoretical research	1 (4.35%)	1 (3.33%)	2 (3.77%)
	Empirical and theoretical research	1 (4.35%)	2 (6.67%)	3 (5.66%)
	Total	23 (100%)	30 (100%)	53 (100%)
Method	Qualitative research	19 (82.60%)	28 (93.33%)	47 (88.68%)
	Quantitative research	2 (8.70%)	1 (3.33%)	3 (5.66%)
	Mixed-methods research	2 (8.70%)	1 (3.33%)	3 (5.66%)
	Total	23 (100%)	30 (100%)	53 (100%)

[Table 1: The Categories of Research Topic and Method in the Two Journals]

Overall, those results show most of the articles which focus on digital media and nationalism are empirical and qualitative research. Despite digital media is a new communication technology, there are few articles that try to explain and explore the theoretical relation between digital media and nationalism. In the next section, this study analyzes research topic, materials, and the contribution in

theoretical development in digital nationalism in 53 articles.

4. Several Trends in Digital Nationalism Studies

4-1. Study Fields

The field of “diasporic nationalism” has the largest number of articles in the two journals. Those diasporic nations or races includes Indian, Kurdish, Tamil, Eritrean, Arab, Greek, Mexican, Palestinian (Dorman, 2005; Eriksen, 2007; Fuglerud, 2001; Field, 2014; Koukoutsaki-Monnier, 2012; Kaftan, 2013; Kurien, 2017; Pèrez, 2014; Saunders, 2008; Skop & Adams, 2009; Şenay, 2013). The emergence of digital media, especially the Internet greatly helps the diaspora to contact each other and enhance the identity of motherland.

On the other hand, the local governments and people usually face the political, economic and cultural problems when diasporas immigrant to their countries. The distribution of resources and cultural differences usually exacerbate the tense relation already existing between local people and diasporas, and finally may lead to diplomatic problem. Accompanied by above situation, there are some of research focus on how the local governments and people deal with the problem of migrants (Piwoni, 2015; Olsen, 2017).

Secondly, there are many studies focuses on the issues of European Union (UN) and the contradiction between member countries (Capelos & Exadaktylos, 2016; Hecke, 2017; Kaiser, 2017; Lialiouti & Bithymitris, 2016; Michailidou, 2016; Schünemann, 2017). Third, some articles explore the relationship between nationalism and globalization (Catterall, 2011; Kaldor, 2004; Renwick, 2001). Fourth, many articles observe the parties and organizations’ propaganda through their official websites or social media (Alessio, 2015; Egan, 2014; Ichijo, 2012; Kangas, 2013; Madisson & Ventsel, 2015; Sørensen, 2014).

4-2. Materials

In those digital nationalism studies, they observe phenomena through a variety of digital materials. In digital facilities, those studies include computer, cellphone, satellite television, CD (e.g., Field, 2014; Löden, 2014; Phillips, 2012; Pèrez, 2014; Renwick, 2001; Roszko, 2015). In digital content, most researches use internet to collect materials. As to the category of websites, those materials come from online news, online survey, government and organization official websites, social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, blog,), online database (e.g., Alessio, 2015; Hecke, 2017; Ichijo, 2012; Jones, 2008; Kaiser, 2017; Madession & Ventsel, 2015; Skop & Adams, 2009).

4-3. Several novel concepts in digital media and nationalism studies

After teasing out the articles which focus on the exploration of theory of digital media and

nationalism, the author summarized the several characteristics of the construction of national identity through digital media: (1) deterritorialisation; (2) virtual communities/ nations; (3) cultural intimacy online; (4) cultural spatialised. It is worth noting that four concepts are developed in digital media and diasporic nationalism studies.

First of all, some articles pointed out the diaspora strengthened their national identity through the Internet. The phenomenon of 'deterritorialisation' shows that there is no geographic limit in the construction of diasporic nationalism after the emergence of the Internet (Eriksen, 2007; Koukoutsaki-Monnie, 2012; Kania-Lundholm & Lindgren, 2015).

Secondly, Eriksen (2007) mentioned the concept of 'virtual nations'. He explained that some white Afrikaners used the internet to create a virtual nation in South Africa. After the African National Congress won by an overwhelming majority in 1994, some white Afrikaners thought they lost their own country. Therefore, through the internet, they tried to build a substitute nation in order to compensate for the loss of their real country.

Thirdly, the concept of 'cultural intimacy online' originates from cultural intimacy. Kania-Lundholm & Lindgren (2015) explained: "Cultural intimacy between members of the same nation refers to a sense of connection based on familiarity with national traits and flaws and to practices of daily negotiation of common sociality and identity within the nation-state (p. 3)." Poland was challenged with democratization, modernization and Europeanization after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Kania-Lundholm & Lindgren (2015) analyzed the debate on new/old patriotism in a Polish online discussion forum. (The characteristics of old patriotism are emotional, exclusive and nostalgic. On the other hand, the new patriotism is rational, responsible, and intending to think the role of citizenship in the new nationalism.) The online discussion forum is a space of cultural intimacy which offers a public sphere to people to share different opinions of nationalism. In the debate, cultural intimacy online not only enhanced national identity, but also triggered people to think the definition and responsibility in the modern democratic nation. On the other hand, cultural intimacy online broke the limit of geography so that people can share the opinions and experiences no matter at home or abroad.

Finally, Skop & Adams (2009) created the concept of 'cultural spatialised'. They analyzed the Indian migrants and second generation in the United States. The Indian migrants used ethnically oriented websites to resist the force of assimilation and maintained their values and beliefs distinct from mainstream American culture. Skop & Adams suggested that: "Traditional Indian culture is spatialised through technology, and that spatialised technology is infused with ideological symbols of the past whereby individuals draw upon myths and legends, folklore and history to remake a nostalgic and highly selective conception of Indian culture. (p. 142)" Through the internet, the culture is embodied and becomes a part of cyberspace.

5. Conclusion

This study intends to combine quantitative and qualitative research method in observing the research trend of digital nationalism studies. In the analysis of the two journals— *National Identities* and *Nations and Nationalism*, there are several findings: First of all, most articles tended to use qualitative research in digital nationalism studies. Secondly, there are only few articles that try to theoretically explore the relationship between digital communication technology and nationalism. That shows most articles take the relationship for granted. Third, the appearance of digital technology especially helps the diaspora to maintain and construct the national identity of motherland. Fourth, there are a wide variety of digital facilities and contents which people can use to construct the national identity compared with the past. Finally, some articles mentioned several novel concepts— deterritorialisation, virtual communities/ nations, cultural intimacy online, cultural spatialised that we can explore further in the digital media and nationalism studies.

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