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**Investigation of Migration-Related Challenges  
in Order to Develop  
an Online Information Network for Persian Immigrants**

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**work conducted under the guidance of**

**Professor Joaquim Silva**

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## **Abstract**

International migration is one of the most challenging issues of recent decades which has led to plenty of research on various aspects of migration. Many researchers conducted investigations to recognize the needs and impediments in the migration process as well as proposing suggestions to tackle the problem of adaptation and integration of immigrants to the new environment. Internet as a vehicle of communication and a platform for information retrieval has become the most popular medium among immigrants, facilitating the transnational practices and their adaptation process to the new society. Iran is one of the countries with the high rate of immigration, intensified following the 1979 Islamic revolution. While the Iranian immigrants as a minority group in most countries are not well organized and suffer from lack of social supports, there is no comprehensive informative online platform in which they can acquire their necessary information and communicate with fellow immigrants. We therefore aimed to propose a Persian information network for Iranian immigrants to meet their needs of information and communication in their new society. The first part of this study was investigating the literature upon different aspects of migration and Iranian immigrants' needs and barriers throughout their migration process. The second part included the development of a survey to explore the sample of Iranian immigrants' needs and impediments during their post-migration life and their attitude and behavior toward an online co-creative website. To this aim, we recruited 201 Persian immigrant individuals to participate in our research for examining the possibility of developing a Persian information network in order to present free information and social support to Iranian immigrants. Our results showed that the majority of the sample population had positive attitude toward using and contributing to such a network with the purpose of value co-creation through exchanging and integrating of knowledge and experiences.

**Keywords:** Migration, Migration-related challenges, Iranian immigrants, Internet, Social media, Value co-creation



## **Resumo**

A migração internacional é um dos maiores desafios das últimas décadas, a qual tem levado a várias pesquisas sobre os vários aspetos relacionados com a migração. Muitos investigadores levaram a cabo investigações de modo a reconhecerem as necessidades e impedimentos associados ao processo de imigração, bem como propuseram sugestões sobre como enfrentar o problema da adaptação e integração dos imigrantes ao novo ambiente. A internet é um veículo de comunicação e uma plataforma de recuperação de informação que se tornou no meio mais popular entre os imigrantes, facilitando as práticas transnacionais e o seu processo de adaptação à nova sociedade. O Irão é um dos países com maior taxa de imigração, a qual se intensificou após a revolução Islâmica de 1979. Os imigrantes iranianos como grupos maioritários na maioria dos países não se encontram bem organizados e sofrem com a falta de apoios sociais, não existe nenhuma plataforma online que os permita adquirir as informações necessárias e comunicar com os seus companheiros imigrantes. Por isso no presente trabalho de investigação temos como objetivo propor uma rede de informação persa para os imigrantes iranianos, de modo a satisfazer as suas necessidades de informação e comunicação na sua nova sociedade. A primeira parte deste estudo recaiu sobre a investigação da literatura sobre os diferentes aspetos da migração e as necessidades e barreiras que os imigrantes iranianos enfrentam ao longo do seu processo de migração. A segunda parte incluiu o desenvolvimento de uma pesquisa através do uso de uma amostra de modo a explorar as necessidades e impedimentos da vida dos imigrantes iranianos após a sua migração, bem como as suas atitudes e comportamentos em relação a um site online co-criativo. Para este fim, recrutamos 201 imigrantes persas para participar numa pesquisa exploratória com o intuito de examinar a possibilidade do desenvolvimento de uma rede de informação persa que ofereça informação e apoio social gratuito aos imigrantes iranianos. Os nossos resultados mostraram que a maioria da população da amostra tinha uma atitude positiva relativamente ao uso e contribuição de uma rede que tenha como objetivo a cocriação de valor através da troca e integração de conhecimentos e experiências.

**Palavras-chave:** Migração, Desafios relacionados com an imigração, Imigrantes Iranianos, Internet, Mídias sociais, Cocriação de Valor



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## 1. Introduction

International migration as the movement of people across borders has turned to an upward trend throughout the recent decades. Economic globalization, technological development and media revolution have led to a noticeable increase in movements of individuals who are seeking better social security, economic opportunity or political asylum beyond their homeland boundaries (Čiarnienė & Kumpikaitė-Valiūnienė, 2008; Richmond, 2002). This process is associated with crucial challenges that could affect immigrants' wellbeing and psychological health due to high levels of stress stemming from a sudden change in their routines life (Cummins & Wooden, 2014; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; VicHealth, 2012).

Language barrier, discrimination, economic integration and information needs are among the most important challenges faced by immigrants during their resettlement process according to many researches (Beiser & Hou, 2001; Beiser & Hou, 2006; Bhugra, 2004; George, 2002; Li, 2000; Noh et al, 1999). Since the adaptation and integration of immigrants to the new environment is a major priority in order to gain the most expected benefits for both individuals and the society, it is vital to recognize and eliminate the impediments in the migration process.

In recent years, internet has become the most popular medium among immigrants, meeting their diverse needs during their absorption process into the new society. Internet helps immigrants by providing information about the new environment as well as offering the opportunity to create online communities and improve interpersonal relationships (Chen, 2010; Dekker & Engbersen, 2014; Kissau 2012; Mahler 2001; Weiskopf & Kissau, 2008). Online social media play a remarkable role in immigrants' lives as media enable them to preserve their ties with individuals from their background while creating new relationships within the new environment (Durham, 2004; Elias, 2008; Georgiou, 2006; Hwang & He, 1999; Lee, 2004; Raman & Harwood, 2008; Tsai, 2006). Media create a space for immigrants to interact with each other based on their mutual needs and interests as well as providing access to rich sources of information (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Dekker & Engbersen, 2014; Haythornthwaite 2005; Wellman 2001). Moreover, social media allow users to contribute to the richness of networks by generating their own contents through spreading their information, knowledge and experiences (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014).



In this respect, media have the potential to provide a space for immigrants to express themselves and integrate their resources within the online networks through value co-creation. Social networking websites as the instruments which enhance engagement of value co-creation have generated new ways of interaction and resource integration within a system of connected actors. These networks therefore can help immigrants to exchange personal experiences and knowledge as well as acquiring desirable information leading to consumers' satisfaction and the well-being of system (Chandler & Vargo 2011; Romero & Molina, 2011; See-To & Ho, 2014; Vargo et al. 2008).

Iranians are among the nations who have immigrated for different reasons at different times throughout the history; however this trend has been intensified following the Islamic revolution in 1979. The exact size of the Iranian expat population is not precisely known but it is approximated that four to five million Iranians live abroad, according to formal sources (Iranian Diaspora, n.d.). Since the Iranian immigrants as minority communities in most countries are neither well organized nor obtain any formal aids from the government and official institutions, they are heavily dependent on ethnic resources to integrate and navigate themselves within the new society. Accordingly, in the current project, we aim to develop a Persian information website for Iranian immigrants that would allow individuals to produce and retrieve information based on their own cultural perspectives and enables them to communicate and interact in a user-friendly space.

This study will be conducted in two phases as following. The first phase is reviewing the previous literature concerning immigration, migration-related challenges, role of internet and media in immigrant's lives, Iranian immigrants' needs and barriers and value co-creation through social media. The second phase involves the development of a questionnaire to investigate a sample of Iranian immigrants regarding their needs and impediments during their post-migration life, exploring the role of internet and media in Iranian immigrants' life, discovering the Persian immigrants' willingness to use such an ethnic information network and the level of their contribution to the website in order to expand our knowledge and find adequate supports for this project.



## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Migration

Migration is the international movement of people to a foreign country in which they do not have citizenship for residency. There are many reasons for immigration, however in general, people migrate because they think that they can improve their own or their family's lives by migration. In other words, migration is often the individuals' seeking of social security, economic opportunity or political asylum which they do not have in their native country (Richmond, 2002).

Considering migration as an important feature of 21st century and since immigrants make up an increasing percentage of population in many developed nations, it is a major priority to have a better understanding of this process in order to eliminate the barriers and make it beneficial for both individuals and societies (Asanin & Wilson, 2008). Immigration and settling down in a new society, can be one of the most complex processes and a potentially stressful experience in an individual's life, which can lead to high levels of stress with negative impact on wellbeing and resilience as well as increasing the risk of psychological problems such as anxiety and depression (Anikeeva et al., 2010; Cummins & Wooden, 2014; Ellis et al., 2010; VicHealth, 2012; Werkuyten & Nekuee, 1999).

There are various structural factors which influence the lives of immigrants before, upon and after arrival such as immigration policies, economic and labor market issues, attitudes toward immigrants and the degree of assistance provided by the government or other agencies to support resettlement and so forth. All these aspects of immigration experience can significantly affect the context of reception for immigrants and have important impact on the process of adjustment, settlement and integration (Bozorgmehr & Moeini, 2016). However, there is notable variation in the responses of immigrants to migration-related challenges. While some individuals experience mental health problems such as depression, others deal effectively with the challenges they confront (Lindert et al., 2009; Wong & Miles, 2014).

Researchers demonstrate that some factors such as being younger, being unemployed, having a shorter duration of residency in a new country, being unmarried, lack of family support, experiencing of discrimination and cultural differences are related to a higher level of depression



(Alizadeh-Khoei et al., 2011; Anikeeva et al., 2010; Hocking et al., 2015; Hosseini et al., 2017; Khavarpour & Rissel, 1997; Paradies, 2006; Paul & Moser, 2009; Sharifi et al., 2015; VicHealth, 2012). According to literature, language difficulties, discrimination and economic difficulties are among the most important resettlement challenges for immigrants (Beiser & Hou, 2001; Beiser & Hou, 2006; Bhugra, 2004; Li, 2000; Noh et al., 1999). Other barriers encountered by immigrants include lack of experience in the host country, lack of social network, lack of availability of information sources and unfamiliarity with the new society (Daneshvary et al., 1992; Heilbrunn & Kushnirovich, 2008; Nee et al., 1994; Offer, 2007).

### **2.1.1. Migration-related Challenges**

#### **2.1.1.1. Language Barrier**

Language difficulty is among the most challenging issues during the resettlement of immigrants. Although technological development in communication and transportation has led to a remarkable decrease in initial costs of migration, cultural and linguistic borders are still playing an important role for international migration flows (Belot & Ederveen, 2012; Adsera & Pytlikova, 2012). Language barrier can limit economic opportunities, access to health and social services and increase the feeling of being outsiders (Mui et al., 2007). Moreover, immigrants are reported to confront with societal barriers such as discrimination based on language and nationality which are found to be impediments to cultural transition (Sinacore et al., 2009).

For instance, Jewish immigrants in Canada reported difficulties in entering the Canadian society and making friends with Canadian people as they cannot meet the natives' expectation of high levels of English or French language (Sinacore et al., 2009). In another example, Ou et al. (2010) approved that patients who do not speak the local language were disadvantaged in their access to health services which is confirmed by other researchers. They argued that those patients who face language barriers have poorer health outcomes in comparison to patients with proficiency in local language (Derose & Baker, 2000; Divi et al., 2007; Fiscella et al., 2009; Flores et al., 2003). This result is in line with other studies (Ahmad et al., 2004b; Asanian & Wilson, 2008; Deri, 2005; O'Mahony & Donnelly, 2007).



These findings reveal that in general, language difficulties pose a barrier to receive appropriate health care and in particular immigrants express apprehension regarding their ability to convey their health concerns in a foreign language, interpret medical directions provided by physicians and physicians' ability to comprehend their health concerns. Moreover, language barrier is one of the factors which greatly affects the integration of immigrants into the labor market of the host country as it raises difficulties in accessing to information sources and applying for desirable jobs due to lack of ability in making contacts (Heilbrunn et al., 2010). While adequate language skills enable immigrants to actively engage in social, occupational and cultural life in their new environments, limited local language proficiency might lead to alienation, social isolation and under-utilization of health and other services (Alizadeh-Khoei et al., 2011). Language barrier therefore can have serious consequences for expatriates due to exclusion from everyday communication with host country nationals as language is considered an essential instrument which enables immigrants to develop their understanding of the new culture and society (Selmer, 2006; Selmer & Lauring, 2015).

Immigrants will become accustomed to the new society throughout the time, however it is important for them to learn how to overcome these barriers at their initial stages as the first years of migration have a significant impact on their future in order to integrate successfully to their adopted country (Caidi et al., 2010; Stack & Iwasaki, 2009).

#### **2.1.1.2. Acculturative Integration**

Beside the language barrier, immigrants often face numerous challenges carrying out successful integration such as immigration stress, racial and ethnic discrimination and loss of their supportive and social reference group such as family, community and religious institution (Yost & Lucas, 2002). According to Lueck and Wilson (2010), "acculturative stress is a reduction in mental health and wellbeing of ethnic minorities that occurs during the process of adaptation to a new culture" (p.48), and it can lead to difficulties in adjustment to the new society. This difficulty could vary depending on the amount of differences which exists between immigrants' ethnic background and the new host culture (Lueck & Wilson, 2010; Smart & Smart, 1995; Sadowsky & Lai, 1997; Thomas, 2006). Discrimination is one of the fundamental components that affects the migration process and mostly happens due to color or race, nationality, religion,



language and ethnicity and varies by country. It has been demonstrated that self-reported discrimination and attitude toward ethnic minorities are certainly related to natives' perception about them. Natives often see the immigrants as those who worsen their country's standard of living, commit crimes and take jobs away which might be because of racist and discriminatory attitude, economic hardship or due to immigrants' related issues (Constant et al., 2009). Consequently, on the path of immigrants' integration to their new society, there are numerous significant integration barriers such as linguistic, educational and institutional factors as well as internal impediments such as differences in social, cultural and religious norms, immigrants' perception of themselves and lack of motivation and intergenerational mobility (Constant et al., 2009).

### **2.1.1.3. Economic Integration**

Economic integration represents one of the main problems of immigrants during resettlement. Due to language barrier, unfamiliarity with the culture, lack of professional skills or formal education, differences in mentality, inadequate human and social capital and availability of information sources, immigrants usually face difficulties entering the host country's labor market (Heilbrunn et al., 2010).

Many immigrants are often not allowed to undertake their chosen occupation in their new country due to lack of acceptance of their foreign credentials or work experiences (Aycan & Berry, 1996; Reitz, 2001; Sloane-Seale, 2005). For example, in a study conducted by Kahanec et al. (2013), it is indicated that negative perceptions and attitudes toward newcomers were "the single most persistent and significant non-institutional barrier to labor market participation in European Union" (p.8). In another research, Sinacore and Mikhail (2009) with regard to the Jewish community and Canadian society noticed that the participants do not know how to negotiate the Canadian job market. It was hard for them to gain information about the process of employment, as they feel frustrated with the lack of available information about how the job market operates. Some of them who attended workshops at employment agencies also found the education inadequate since the workshops focused on resume and letter writings rather than educate immigrants about the Canadian job market. Therefore, these factors can be positively



associated with lower job satisfaction, lesser commitment to work, poor mental health and more difficulties in social integration (Cross & Turner, 2013).

#### **2.1.1.4. Information Need**

Information need is another aspect of migration which can highly influence immigrants' lives during their absorption process to the new society. Studies from social work that focus on immigrants' settlement highlight remarkable information needs and their urgency throughout the settlement period (George, 2002). Weerasinghe (2000) and Caidi et al. (2010) mentioned a number of problems such as communication barriers, lack of knowledge of the host country, poor socioeconomic and family networks and lack of recognition of foreign educational or professional credentials, which are all to some extent caused by lack of relevant information. These are critical problems for immigrants, who are generally unfamiliar with the overall system in the new country and may suffer of not knowing how or where to seek help in the new environment, which can lead to their social exclusion.

Without adequate information access, immigrants will be unable to make informed choices and decisions. Since immigrants and particularly newcomers may not yet have information sources and established patterns, navigation through an unfamiliar environment can be a complex and frustrating process (Bozorgmehr & Moeini, 2016). There are shared general information needs for all immigrants that result from a gap of knowledge, regarding finding a place to live, education, transportation, legal issues, finding a job, health care system, taxes and so forth (Shoham & Strauss, 2007).

In many cases, immigrants are not even aware that they have information needs and will only notice it when they notice a gap in their knowledge (Shoham & Strauss, 2007). The information need usually occurs when a person has a decision to make, whether it is a small one or a life-changing one or has a need to seek new ideas or issues to tackle (Devadson et al., 1997). Individuals need to fill the information gaps about the culture and society of the host country to help them make decisions, strengthen their position in their new society and to enhance their feeling of integration during the absorption stage (Bar-Yosef, 1968; Shoham & Strauss, 2007). When immigrants arrive in a new country, it is the beginning of a new period for them in which





they may feel a lack of control or lack of self-confidence as well as the loss of family, of one's culture and identity. They are somehow dependent on the government through bureaucratic channels that makes decisions for them, giving the immigrants an unclear idea about what may happen or can be expected. Once a person moves to a different society, he finds himself in a new environment which is not necessarily the same as the one he used to grow up in. It gives him a feeling of uncertainty which increases the information needs in order to help him cope with his new life, environment and culture (Bar-Yosef, 1968; Shoham & Strauss, 2007). This process is called settlement, by which immigrants adjust to their new homeland and get involved in searching for necessary information and learning a new language (Bozorgmehr & Moeini, 2016).

On a path of immigrants to gain the necessary information, there are multiple barriers which prevent them from finding information upon arrival in their new country. Caidi et al. (2010) categorized these obstacles as structural barriers including language proficiency, lack of knowledge of how system works and limitations arising from one's immigration status as well as social barriers such as differences in cultural values or understanding and communication problems. Savolainen (2008) addressed some other barriers to seek orienting information such as struggling with information overload, difficulties in identifying where to gain access to information that is appropriate to their needs and problems related to the credibility of information. Moreover, immigrants also face other specific difficulties such as emotional stress and social isolation stemming from the new environment and a lack of financial stability (Caidi et al., 2010). However, insufficient or lack of language proficiency is considered as the most fundamental barrier to access necessary information such as health services, learning how the system works, knowing what services are available or how to ask for services by most researchers (Caidi & Allard, 2005; Caidi et al., 2008; Chu, 1999; Cortinois, 2008; Fisher et al., 2004; Prock, 2003; Shoham & Strauss, 2008; Stavri, 2001; Su & Conaway, 1995).

As it was discussed earlier, resettlement in a new country can be a distressing experience, especially in the case of forced immigrants. It includes the emotional shock of relocation and a need to solve multiple and complex tasks while attempting to navigate an unfamiliar environment without any support networks (Cortinois, 2008). Therefore, having access to reliable, comprehensive and consistent information on a broad spectrum of subjects is crucial at



this stage (Asanin & Wilson, 2008). Many immigrants face significant challenges in finding appropriate information or mistrust of others due to lack of social supports which may make them feel isolated and emotionally distressed (Pumariega et al., 2005). It has been stated that among immigrant groups, new immigrants in particular can be identified as information poor due to lack of time or opportunities to develop adequate local networks and not knowing how to navigate their new information environment (Bozorgmehr & Moeini, 2016). According to Kim et al. (2012) this process observed to be even more difficult, when the immigrants who entered the new country, are in their middle age. They feel the immediate pressure to make a living, while having limited time and resources to get familiar with the new society, culture and politics, makes it a hard achieving goal and causes difficulties to acquire necessary information which will have impact on employment, access to services and other opportunities.

Elias & Limish (2009) pointed out that helplessness and confusion are typical feelings among immigrants in their initial stage of settling down due to mentioned problems and misunderstanding of local behaviors and norms. In this respect, Caidi et al. (2010) identified four categories of sources that immigrants commonly make use of them to satisfy their need of information including 1) social networks such as family, friends, co-workers, ethnic community members and fellow immigrants; 2) formal sources such as government departments, settlement agencies, ethno-cultural organizations and other service providers; 3) information and communication technologies such as internet and online networks that provide information for newcomers and 4) ethnic media such as Satellite TV, ethnic local newspaper or radio and ethnic websites. As an example of using these channels for seeking information, Shoham & Strauss (2007) who carried out a research on information needs of North American immigrant in Israel, found out that each family went about obtaining information through different paths such as attending the meetings of fellow immigrants, calling friends or other contacts, speaking with related formal organizations, communicating with other families moving to that country, reading newspapers and watching news programs, using internet and so forth.

It has been argued that the primary source of support for most immigrants is their own compatriots who may provide useful information and support for them. Since there is a feeling of solidarity among them, the immigrants ask for support in their social networks, trying to help



each other and giving advice to other compatriots (Caidi et al., 2010). They try to response their needs of information regarding every small or big issues such as what doctor to use, where to find a certain food, how to rent a house or buy a car, where to go shopping, etc. In a research by Carnabuci & Wezel (2011), they documented that there is a positive correlation between learning from other immigrants who are going through carrier transition and the successful career transition, by providing information about the demands of the new society and reduction of the ambiguity inherent in cross-cultural transitions.

Altogether, the matter of seeking and gathering information is critical in immigration process, as it is a fundamental issue that enhances the feeling of integration and strengthens the immigrant's position in his new environment. Integration into a new culture and society can be facilitated, if the language of the country is already known or if the immigrant has a social network to get support and a sense of community (Bar-Yosef, 1968; Danso, 2001; Fisher et al., 2004; Walsh & Horenczyk, 2001).

### **2.1.2. Role of Internet and Media in Immigrants' Life**

#### **2.1.2.1. Internet**

The emerge of new technologies has decreased the cost of communication on one hand and richened the communication content as well as travel costs reduction on the other hand (Komito, 2011). The internet has become a social medium, offering individual users the broad range of opportunities into an open network structure, acting as one of the main facilitators of transnational practices (Caidi et al., 2010; Dekker & Engbersen, 2014). The internet is potentially the most suitable tool for fostering both local and transnational networks which can be a significant information source for immigrants, offering them several advantages across great distances (Caidi et al., 2010). It facilitates the adaptation of immigrants by enhancing the interpersonal relationships and providing them with an easily access to learn about their new environment through performing as a channel of communication and a platform for information retrieval (Chen. 2010; Weiskopf & Kissau, 2008).

In recent years, internet has become the most popular medium among immigrants by which they can gather information about the new society, communicate with fellow immigrants and local



people, looking for occupational opportunities, handling bureaucratic processes and generally overcoming the barriers and stresses created by resettlement which leads to lowering the cost and lessening the risk of migration (Chen, 2010; Weiskopf & Kissau, 2008). Moreover, internet provides an opportunity for immigrants to create information networks and online social support communities in which they can share their knowledge and experiences, enabling them actively produce media contents rather than being only mere consumers (Mahler 2001; Kissau 2012; Dekker & Engbersen, 2014).

Several studies have investigated the impact of internet on migration process and immigrants' lives during their settlement and absorption process in new environment. For example, Tsai (2006) explored the influence of internet on adaptation of Taiwanese immigrants in the United States and found that since the Taiwanese immigrants faced difficulties in terms of language proficiency, loss of social network and social disconnection during resettlement, internet greatly facilitated their adaptation and helped them overcoming these barriers by providing supporting channels and offering strategies to cope with the stress of migration. Georgiou (2006) observed that small immigrant communities in the UK who suffered from lack of economic and political resources, developed efficient communication channels for spreading information through internet which had a crucial impact on their wellbeing in the new society. Weiskopf & Kissau (2008) also obtained similar evidences from the behavior of former Soviet Union who immigrated to Israel, stating that 76.7 percent of the interviewed immigrants predominantly used the internet for information retrieval. Furthermore, many scholars have found that internet is the most important alternative for immigrant populations in various nations and helps them to reconnect with their homeland and strengthen community ties as well as cultural adaptation and finding intimate partners (Chan, 2005; Croucher et al., 2009; Eriksen, 2007; Wang et al., 2009).

#### **2.1.2.2. Social Media**

Media plays a significant role in immigrants' lives, as it helps them to preserve their original cultural identity as well as updating immigrants with the new society (Elias, 2008; Georgiou, 2006). The nature and quality of social interaction, helps immigrant in their adaptation process and maintaining ties with the homeland which is considered as an important factor for successful resettlement of immigrants (Hwang & He, 1999; Raman & Harwood, 2008; Durham, 2004; Lee,



2004; Tsai, 2006). Social media facilitate migration by enabling links of all types, whether “strong ties” or “weak ties” (Komito, 2011). They allow communications to become more widespread and provide groundwork to access a wide range of individuals with whom they have weak or even no ties (Haythornthwaite, 2002). Social media have the potential to preserve strong ties with family and friends along with developing weak ties which are expanded through organizing the process of migration and integration. Social media help immigrants to access a wide range of individuals and shape the community based on mutual interests and benefits. Moreover, they propose a rich source of knowledge other than official sources which could have a significant impact on immigrants’ adaptation to the new society (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014).

Today, social media not only make information available publicly through both formal and informal sources, but also have created a social space in which users can contribute to the richness of networks by generating their own contents. In this respect, social media refer not only to social network sites such as Facebook or MySpace, but also to forums, weblogs and generally any kind of online application that allow users to contribute and share their knowledge in order to boost the network (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014). Information regarding goods and services, employment opportunities, business, health care and so forth which are used to transfer through word of mouth and face-to-face interaction previously, are now accessible over the internet and social media, which help immigrants to navigate themselves in new environment and make them a source of information for the latent immigrants (Shoham & Strauss, 2007; Caeidi et al., 2010). The migration networks contain the basis of every migratory process information and link social groups that possess different pools of information together. New immigrants can obtain different pieces of information such as how to organize the journey, what to expect on arrival, how to deal with new environment and where to go for different services through accessing the social capital that the networks provide (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014).

In the process of gathering information, weak ties are usually more valuable than the strong ones, as they largely provide new and applicable information for individuals who were in the same position regardless of previous familiarity (Granovetter, 1973; Dekker & Engbersen, 2014). Through the open structure offered by social media, immigrants can reach and contact each other in order to satisfy their needs of information, improve their social ties and create communities of



interest (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Dekker & Engbersen, 2014; Haythornthwaite 2005; Wellman 2001). In sum, social media have provided groundwork for cheaper, more frequent and richer communication plus an access to assistance or information, leading to a great change in the nature of migrant networks which was less readily in pre-existing social networks. Furthermore, social support will contribute to mitigate the stress of acculturative process concerning migration or life in a new country (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014).

### **2.1.2.3. Ethnic Media**

Ethnic media refer to the kind of media produced for a particular ethnic community, which plays a critical role in migration process and immigrants' lives. New immigrants with little foreign language proficiency and limited information about the new environment, need to be supported by ethnic community and rely on co-ethnic networks in order to navigate themselves in a new society. Upon arrival, the task of gathering information regarding housing, legal issues, different services and job opportunities is difficult to gain by immigrants as they are not well connected to the networks in the mainstream society and their family or friendship networks are no longer sufficient to meet these diverse needs. Therefore, Ethnic media as a medium which are most familiar to immigrants effectively connect them to the host society, filling the various needs of new immigrants and keep them informed about the new environment (Zhou & Cai, 2002).

Ethnic medium have been found to have a noticeable impact on the intercultural adaptation process of immigrants (Chen, 2010). In a research by Ziegler (1983), he addressed three functions for the foreign language press in the United States including 1) facilitating the process of assimilation by providing information and advice about the new society; 2) serving as a channel of news about the homeland and 3) acting as a medium of communication for non-English speaking immigrants. Ye (2005; 2006) found that the use of online ethnic social groups among Chinese students in the United States help them cope with the stress of adaptation. Fisher et al. (2004) examination of low income Hispanic farm migrants, also reveals that they prefer to use trusted Spanish speaking sources from fellow immigrants who immigrated to that region earlier in order to satisfy their information needs since the language is the largest barrier for this group. In another example, Chien (2005) observed that newcomers to Toronto often have blogs in their first languages to share their information with their fellow immigrants, providing them



with information sources as well as social networks for both content generators and information seekers. These transnational sources such as online language newspapers and websites are regularly consulted by immigrants, helping them to retain social networks with individuals from their homeland (Aizlewood & Doody, 2002; Caidi & MacDonald, 2008; Caidi et al., 2010).

Economic integration is another priority for immigrants which can be achieved through ethnic media. These media can help newcomers and those immigrants who might have some limitation in their career choices such as women or middle aged ones, to find opportunities through their social networks and referrals from familiar people (Sumption, 2009). For example, it is estimated that around fifty percent of all jobs are obtained through informal networks, using referrals and recommendation from relatives, friends or other members of these social networks (Cahuc & Fontaine 2009; Montgomery, 1991; Wahba & Zenou, 2005). Therefore, available personal and social resources will have an influence upon the number of difficulties and barriers that immigrants are forced to cope with in the labor market (Heilbrunn et al., 2010).

Communication is another key factor in migration procedure which plays a vital role in the process of intercultural adaptation. Immigrants form their physical or virtual community in order to communicate with other individuals and the members show their commitment to the online community based on their shared cultural values, common background, common language and a shared historical identity and heritage (Navarrete & Huerta, 2006). Many immigrants feel challenges to their ethnic identity in a new and different cultural context where traditions, history, celebrations and holidays are usually different from their own background which can lead to a sense of loss of identity during their absorption to the new society. In this respect, ethnic media can connect people through their own events and traditions as well as acting as a potential bridge between immigrants' home and host country (Sinacore et al., 2009). In other words, ethnic media provide a cultural space for immigrants who are interested in engaging with their former culturally-relevant activities such as arts and literature, favorite movies, music and sport and provide them a platform to have their physical events and communication following their virtual community (Navarrete & Huerta, 2006; Zhou & Cai, 2002).



There are also some other situations in which immigrants may suffer due to cultural norms and differences with the new society. Healthcare related issues, for example, can be mentioned as one of the most important concerns for immigrants that can put them in inconvenient conditions because of different understanding of health, illness and treatment as well as different beliefs on appropriate behavior. In these cases, ethnic media can serve immigrants by providing information and connection to their own background and culture (Caidi et al., 2010). Moreover, ethnic media as a social institution strengthen immigrants' sense of "we-ness", especially when they are not confident to make friends with native people or other ethnic group members due to reasons such as lack of foreign language proficiency or lack of confidence in developing new interpersonal relationships (Zhou & Cai, 2002).

Ethnic media can therefore act as a mediator in a number of ways. They can spread news and information about the new society, act as a means of learning and adaptation to the host country as well as preserving the cultural heritage of immigrants and strengthen the sense of intra-group solidarity (Kim et al., 2012; Modarresi, 2001). Ethnic media can also provide immigrants a space to express themselves through writing and sharing their experiences with others, giving them a voice to their opinions which could not be normally this comfortable in their homeland (Zhou & Cai, 2002). For instance, Mitra (2006) argued that immigrants of Indian origin use Indian websites to express themselves freely in a safe space. Wenjing (2005) also described that Chinese websites enable Chinese immigrants to keep their original identities as well as creating new ones based on experiences in the new society.

Altogether, affiliation and connection with the ethnic social groups and organizations, access to the ethnic economy and participation in ethnic leisure activities decrease problems associated with migration such as language barrier (Besier & Hou, 2006).

### **2.1.3. Iranian Immigrants**

Iran is an ancient Asian country with a long and rich history of more than 4000 years. Throughout the history, Iranians have immigrated for work, education or economic reasons and this trend has continued for different reasons at different times. However, the new waves of immigration have started following the Islamic revolution in 1979 due to political issues





(Modarresi, 2001; Naghdi, 2010). In recent decades, a noticeable number of Iranians have migrated to US, UAE, Turkey and Canada, followed by European countries, Australia, Japan and Malaysia as well as some other small countries all over the world (Naghdi, 2010). There is no precise statistic about the Iranian diaspora, but it is estimated that four to five million Iranians live abroad, according to formal sources (Iranian Diaspora, n.d.).

The majority of Iranian immigrants are economic, scientific and technical elites whom traditionally used to be intellectuals and highly educated people; however there has been a flow of immigration in recent years among Iranian individuals who were forced to leave the country due to political and social issues, forming different social classes all over the world (Naghdi, 2010). In either situation of mandatory or voluntary migration, complete absorption into a new society is a complex and difficult process which might not be obtained easily. There are very few studies considering Iranian immigrants and their migration-related challenges. In what follows the important ones are discussed.

As it is mentioned before, migration is considered a challenging experience, although there is notable variation in response to migration-related challenges. Similar to all other minorities, immigration for Persians is also associated with difficulties during the resettlement stage and higher levels of depression such as feeling of discrimination, unemployment, separation from family and friends, lack of language proficiency and cultural differences (Hosseini et al., 2017). The level of satisfaction with the host country is a combination of several variables including economic factors, mastery in language, level of adaptation and cultural similarity with the new society (Naghdi, 2010).

Iranian immigrants as a minority groups in most countries, may not be well organized or connected in the new environment, suffering from lack of cultural and ethnic community especially during the early stage of migration. Successful economic integration of minorities is a high priority factor which is the basis of their social success and can result in positive integration into cultural domains (Constant et al., 2009). Since the community plays an important role in the occupational and social needs of new immigrants, community support is essential to the cultural transition of immigrant populations with regard to different aspect of migration-related



challenges such as employment or social integration (Sinacore et al., 2009). For example, in a study by Vojdanijahromi (2011) on Iranian immigrants in Canada, she stated that some factors such as lack of Canadian experience, inadequate level of language and non-recognition of foreign credentials can hinder the career transition of Iranian immigrants, while community resources can help them in their profession transition by providing knowledge about the hidden market and potential employment opportunities which leads to better absorption in the new society. In another research, Dastjerdi (2012) found that language barrier and lack of knowledge of Canadian health care system as well as lack of trust in health care services and cultural differences, caused serious problems for Iranian immigrants and they could not use the services properly which can result in psychological stress and mental disorders. In this respect, studies showed that ethnic matching between clients and clinicians will enhance the use of services, helping them to overcome the obstacles such as communication and cultural differences (Dastjerdi, 2012; Hasset et al., 1999; Klimidis et al., 2000; Snowden, 1999; Ziguras et al., 2003).

In this regard, immigrants use ethnic information networks to gain necessary information about different aspect of life in a new country. These information networks help them to be empowered and have control over their lives which is an important factor in adjustment and integration process. Moreover, these individuals then turn into a reliable source of information for newcomers and members can benefit of past experiences from other members who have already adapted to the host culture through these ethnic virtual communities (Dastjerdi, 2012).

Preserving and maintaining ties with Persian language and culture, is another major issue for Iranian immigrants which is mostly fulfilled through various means including Persian radio and television programs, newspapers and other periodicals, Persian events and communication with Iranians through all kinds of virtual and ethnic networks (Modarrresi, 2001). In a study on Iranian American, Bozorgmer & Moeini (2016) stated that the second generation of Iranians wants to know Persian in order to being able to communicate with family and relatives as well as learning about the Persian culture, history and literature. The first generation also believes that knowing Persian, will open more doors and opportunity and enabling their children to connect with more people, learning about both culture and heritage. Furthermore, the cultural associations attempt to keep traditions by holding cultural, national and religious events such as



Nowruz (Persian New Year), Yalda (the longest night of the year), Chaharshanbe Soori (the last Tuesday of the year), folk dance, music and so forth, providing an opportunity for Persian people to meet and communicate with each other (Modarresi, 2001).

Altogether, contributions to education, economic and social integration and development in the new society are the main needs of immigrants in their initial stage of migration which is a crucial time to the success and prosperity of their lives in the future (Stack & Iwasaki, 2009). It has been also indicated that immigrants' needs and barriers in the process of settlement do not differ greatly and the information needs of immigrants remain relatively similar across different societies (Caidi et al., 2010).

Accordingly, in the absence of a comprehensive, informative and communicative network for the Persian immigrants, we aim to conduct a research in order to develop a Persian information network to meet the Iranians immigrants' needs of information, helping them during their absorption process into the new society. Since the internet has provided a stage that individuals can share their knowledge and experiences, we intend to co-create value through producing, exchanging and integration of information with our users via our online network.

## **2.2. Value Co-creation**

According to Vargo and Lusch (2004), service is “the application of competences such as knowledge and skills for the benefit of another” (p.2), meaning that it is a kind of action or performance which is exchanged between the producer and the consumer, generating value for both sides (Vargo & Lusch, 2004).

In recent years, researchers proposed the concept of Service-Dominant (S-D) logic which considers the service as the central component in exchange process and highlights the value-creation that occurs when the consumers use the service rather than the output is manufactured. The service-centered view emphasizes on the role of customers as co-producer in value-creation process and the necessity of expanding the consumers' involvement in customization of the service to better fit their needs (Vargo & Lusch, 2004).



A service system is consisted of service providers and service customers and regarded as an integration of different resources such as individuals, organizations, technology or information which interact with each other in order to co-create value in value chain (Maglio et al., 2009; Spohrer et al., 2007; Vargo et al., 2008).

Co-creation therefore is described as a resource integration process that occurs during practices between actors linked together within a service ecosystem (Frow et al., 2016). In this approach, the actors are interested to share their resources based on their motivation or offered beneficial outcomes during collaborative activities (Frow et al., 2016; Maglio & Spohrer, 2008), and value is always co-created, as it is a joint function of the actions of producers and the consumers (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000; 2004a; Vargo & Lusch, 2008a).

In today's world, value creation depends remarkably on intangible assets such as knowledge, relationships and experiences (Romero & Molina, 2011). In this respect, organizations attempt to provide a groundwork in which they can co-create value with informed, empowered and active consumers (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004b), in order to integrate their preferences, suggestions and feedbacks into the development of new services and interact with the customers through personalizing the services (Füller, 2010).

The development of internet and technological advances have facilitated the process of resources integration between consumers and the firms, turned the customers into the active operant resources in value-creating process (Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014; Nambisan, 2002; O'Hern & Rindfleisch, 2010; Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004a; Saarijärvi et al., 2013; Sawhney et al. 2005). Customers greatly affect the business system and engage actively to co-create value with the firms by interacting and communicating with each other as well as contributing to analysis and evaluation of the system through publishing and sharing their own experiences (Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004b; Romero & Molina, 2011).

As value is shifted to experience, the business environment has turned into a stage for conversation and interaction between consumers, consumer communities and the firms and the interaction between various actors has become the locus of the value creation and value



extraction (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004b). This joint process brings different parties together within collaborative networks and establishes dynamic relationships within a system of connected actors (Maglio & Spohrer, 2008). The value co-creation therefore represents the customer-oriented services rather than the firm-centric approaches (Adner & Kapoor, 2010; Grönroos, 2008a; Grönroos, 2008b; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004b; Strandvik et al., 2012; Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Vargo & Lusch, 2008b).

In recent years, there has been a significant growth in emerge of collaborative networks and customer communities based on internet and online social networking sites (Romero & Molina, 2011). Social Networking Sites are considered as the instruments which enhance engagement of value co-creation in the digital world (See-To & Ho, 2014). Social media have generated new ways of interacting and formed the customer-based value creation system which is empowering word of mouth delivery mechanism and transaction of acquire information more than ever (Romero & Molina, 2011). They allow users to participate in a creative process and support the co-creation practices by enabling the consumers to use their resources and providing desirable resources for other actors through shared course of actions (Chandler & Vargo 2011; Frow et al., 2016; Vargo et al. 2008). In this regard, social media are perfect instrument for value co-creation as they increase the communication between consumers and the firm as well as providing groundwork for users to exchange personal experiences and gain information which leads to consumers' satisfaction and well-being of system (Romero & Molina, 2011; See-To & Ho, 2014).

User-generated content websites are among the most popular social media in which value is co-created by users through creating, contributing, retrieving and exploring content for both fellow users and organization (Gangi & Wasko, 2009). These online environments provide a space for consumers to form their media exposure based on their needs and desires (Liang et al., 2006). YouTube, MySpace, Facebook, Wikipedia and Yelp are some of the examples which support the creation and consumption of user generated contents.

Organizations attempt to encourage the customers to contribute in generating contents and strengthen their network; however individuals' willingness to experience user generated content



can vary greatly based on their attitude and personality. It has been argued that users engage in such actions to gain information about their environment, express their experiences, reduce their own self-doubts and feel a sense of belonging and self-esteem within online communities (Daugherty et al., 2008). Contact with similar individuals within social communities is mentioned as another motivation for participating in co-creation actions (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). In a study on Yelp, reduction in purchase uncertainty and in search time as well as community membership are addressed as motivations for reading user-generated reviews (Parikh et al., 2014). Munar and Jacobsen (2014) who conducted a survey on Norwegian vacationers indicated that altruistic and community-related motivations drive the travelers to post their travel experiences on social networking sites. Yoo and Gretzel (2008) also investigated a consumer panel on Tripadvisor and found that users contributed to online reviews in order to help both the service providers and the travelers with making better decisions. Moreover, it has been stated that online communities which are formulated through value co-creation activities can potentially provide close relationships among the members. These communities promote trust, dependency and tendency to accept others' suggestions, increasing users' willingness to exchange their ideas and facilitate high levels of engagement and participation (de Almeida et al., 2014).

Such collaborations which are achieved through services on internet, provide a space for consumers to establish their social community, interact with each other, share their experiences and information and encourage them to act globally in an open atmosphere, leading to enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty (Edvardsson et al., 2011; Romero & Molina, 2011). Therefore, success in today's business world requires such businesses to employ new perspectives in which consumers contribute in generating contents and organizations provide tools and resources to create and manage interactive experience-sharing communities leading to value co-creation (Romero & Molina, 2011; Schau et al., 2009).

In the current project, we aim to develop a Persian information network to provide Iranian immigrants an online environment in which they can share their knowledge and experiences as well as using other's information in a user-friendly space. Our main objective is to present a unique and rich source of information in Persian language which is accessible to all individuals



who deal with migration-related issues. While there are some informative social media groups on Facebook, Telegram or Whatsapp acting as discussion forums for Persian immigrants within some specific cities or countries, to our best knowledge there is no comprehensive informative online database for such immigrants available. Consequently, we aim to create a supportive environment for resources integration by focusing on mechanism that facilitates interactions among diverse actors through distributing user-generated contents and co-create value with our consumers in our online network. In this respect, we developed a survey based on literature review to investigate the needs and barriers of Iranian immigrants in migration process, their attitude and behavior toward the website, their willingness to use such an information network, their motivation to contribute as content providers and to identify the desirable categories and features of network from their point of view.



### **3. Method**

#### **3.1. Research Design**

This study is designed to evaluate the possibility of developing a Persian online information network for Iranian immigrants. Considering our objective and research characteristics, a quantitative method has been employed to collect, analyze and interpret the results of this research. According to Creswell (2014), a quantitative research is an approach to explore specific and clearly defined questions and verify a theory by examining hypothesis or question derived from the research and the relationship among variables. The researcher therefore can use an instrument to measure the variables or observe the attitude and behavior of participants in a study. Quantitative data is often collected through surveys or questionnaires which are designed to collect and acquire opinions, viewpoints and preferences of population from a sample of that population with the potential of generalizing the findings to larger population (Creswell, 2014; Fowler, 2013).

Accordingly, this research is conducted in two phases as following. The first phase deals with reviewing the previous literature concerning the different aspects of migration and migration-related challenges. The second phase includes applying a questionnaire to investigate a sample of Iranian immigrants regarding their needs and impediments during their post-migration life as well as assessing their attitude and motivation for using and contributing to an online Persian information network.

#### **3.2. Material**

With reference to the literature review, a questionnaire was created to explore and investigate five main categories of variables including 1) identifying migration-related challenges and Iranians immigrants' needs and barriers during emigration process, 2) exploring the role of internet and media in Iranian immigrants' life, 3) discovering Persian immigrants' willingness to use an ethnic information network, 4) identifying the value of co-creation and consumers' contribution to the network and 5) specifying the desirable categories and features for the information network from Iranian immigrants' point of view (Table 1).





Considering the Iranian immigrants as our main users, the questionnaire was designed in Persian which is the native language of Iranian people, using cross-sectional model as the data were collected at one point in time. The survey was developed in an online format, using Google Survey Forms.

Today, online survey is one of the most popular and convenient tools of data collection which offers prominent advantages. The main strength of online surveys can be stated as followings: 1) global reach to desirable sample of participants, 2) flexibility in terms of survey formats and language, 3) time-efficiency and quick access to diverse respondents, 4) low administration cost, 5) potential for designing diverse formats of questions such as single-response, multiple-choice, close-ended questions and even open-ended questions and 6) ease of data entry and analysis for both responses to complete the survey and the researchers to tabulate and analyze the results. Online surveys may also contain some potential weaknesses such as concerns about survey uses by respondents due to privacy issues, lack of online experience and familiarity of possible participants with internet-based questionnaires, low response rate or incomplete and limited responses of participants (Evans & Mathur, 2005).

These difficulties however can be covered by developing a clear, respondent-friendly privacy policies and well-defined questionnaire as well as offering small incentives to improve the response rate of participants (Evans & Mathur, 2005).

### **3.3. Sampling and Recruitment**

A non-probability sampling technique was implemented and the participants were reached via posting the link of the survey through Persian immigrants' online groups on Facebook and Telegram. The web-based surveys help accessing those individuals who cannot easily be reached either due to being hard to be identified and located, or existing in small numbers that would make it hard to reach them in sufficient numbers using probability-based sampling (Fricker, 2016).

Given the main limitation of this study which is the absence of a comprehensive database and official platform to access Iranian immigrants and expats as well as wide geographic diaspora of



this population, the online Persian discussion forums which are shaped by some Iranian immigrants on Facebook and Telegram, were the only sources to reach out this target group.

Two hundred and one individuals over the age of 18, including 106 women and 95 men participated in this study. Participants were asked to answer 25 questions consisted of 7 demographic questions on general information of respondents such as gender, age, marital status and education followed by 18 exploratory questions on migration-related challenges of participants and their approach and behavior toward the project (see appendix for the questions).

### **3.4. Data Analysis**

Regarding the exploratory nature of the survey, a descriptive analysis is applied to describe the results of this study concerning the participants' needs and barriers during their post-migration life as well as their attitude and behavior toward using and contribution to such a network. The data are summarized through using a combination of tabulated description, graphical description and general discussion to explore the research objective and questions. This analysis would help us with turning the collected data into useful information in order to acquire an understanding of our sample migration-related impediments and their attitude and behavior with the purpose of developing an online information network.



Table 1. Questionnaire construct based on literature review

Objective	Construct	References	No. of Questions
Identifying migration-related challenges and immigrants needs and barriers during emigration process	Language barrier	Adsera & Pytlikova, 2012; Ahmad et al., 2004b; Alizadeh-Khoei et al., 2011; Asanian & Wilson, 2008; Belot & Ederveen, 2012; Dastjerdi, 2012; Deri, 2005; Derose & Baker, 2000; Divi et al., 2007; Fiscella et al., 2009; Flores et al., 2003; Heilbrunn et al., 2010; Hosseini et al., 2017; Mui et al., 2007; O'Mahony & Donnelly, 2007; Selmer, 2006; Selmer & Laurant, 2015; Vojdanijahromi, 2011; Zhou & Cai, 2002.	14, 15, 17, 18
	Acculturative integration	Constant et al., 2009; Hosseini et al., 2017; Lueck & Wilson, 2010; Smart & Smart, 1995; Sodowsky & Lai, 1997; Thomas, 2006; Yost & Lucas, 2002.	8,9,10,11,12,13, 14
	Economic integration	Aycan & Berry, 1996; Cross & Turner, 2013; Heilbrunn et al., 2010; Hosseini et al., 2017; Kahanec et al., 2013; Sinacore & Mikhail, 2009; Sloane-Seale, 2005; Reitz, 2001; Vojdanijahromi, 2011.	8, 9,10,11,12,14
	Information need	Asanin & Wilson, 2008; Bar-Yosef, 1968; Bozorgmehr & Moeini, 2016; Caidi & Allard, 2005; Caidi et al., 2008; Caidi et al., 2010; Carnabuci & Chu, 1999; Cortinois, 2008; Elias & Limish, 2009; Fisher et al., 2004; George, 2002; Kim et al., 2012; Prock, 2003; Pumariaga et al., 2005; Savolainen, 2008; Shoham & Strauss, 2007; Shoham & Strauss, 2008; Stavri, 2001; Su & Conaway, 1995; Weerasinghe, 2000; Wezel, 2011.	13,14,17,18
Exploring the role of internet and media in immigrants' life	Internet, social media, ethnic media	Aizlewood & Doody, 2002; Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Caidi et al., 2010; Caidi & MacDonald, 2008; Chan, 2005; Chen, 2010; Chien, 2005; Croucher et al., 2009; Dekker & Engbersen, 2014; Eriksen, 2007; Durham, 2004; Elias, 2008; Fisher et al., 2004; Georgiou, 2006; Harwood, 2008; Haythornthwaite, 2002; Haythornthwaite 2005; Heilbrunn et al., 2010; Hwang & He, 1999; Kim et al., 2012; Komito, 2011; Weiskopf & Kissau, 2008; Modarresi, 2001; Raman & Lee, 2004; Sinacore et al., 2009; Tsai, 2006; Wang et al., 2009; Weiskopf & Kissau, 2008; Wellman 2001; Ye, 2005, 2006; Zhou & Cai, 2002; Ziegler, 1983.	16,17,18
Discovering immigrants' willingness to use an ethnic information network		Aizlewood & Doody, 2002; Asanin & Wilson, 2008; Bozorgmer & Moeini, 2016; Cahuc & Fontaine 2009; Caidi & MacDonald, 2008; Caidi et al., 2010; Carnabuci & Wezel, 2011; Dastjerdi, 2012; Daugherty et al., 2008; Hasset et al., 1999; Heilbrunn et al., 2010; Hennig-Thurau et al.,2004; Klimidis et al., 2000; Mitra, 2006; Montgomery, 1991; Navarrete & Huerta, 2006; Shoham & Strauss, 2007; Snowden, 1999; Sumption, 2009; Wahba & Zenou, 2005; Wenjing , 2005; Zhou & Cai, 2002; Zигuras et al., 2003.	13,15,17,18,19,20
Identifying the value of co-creation and the consumers' contribution to the network		Alexander, 2014; de Almeida et al., 2014; Daugherty et al., 2008; Frow et al., 2016; Gangi & Wasko, 2009; Hennig-Thurau et al.,2004; Jaakkola & Nambisan, 2002; Maglio & Spohrer, 2008; O'Hern & Rindfleisch, 2010; Parikh et al., 2014; Prahalad & Ramaswamy , 2000 & 2004a, 2004b; Romero & Molina, 2011; Saarijärvi et a., 2013; Sawhney et al. 2005; See-To & Ho, 2014; Schau et al., 2009; Vargo & Lusch, 2008.	21,22,23,24
Specifying the desirable categories and features for the information network		Caidi et al., 2010; Dekker & Engbersen, 2014; Kim et al., 2012; Modarresi, 2001; Munar & Jacobsen, 2014; Navarrete & Huerta, 2006; Romero & Molina, 2011; Sinacore et al., 2009; Yoo & Gretzel, 2008; Zhou & Cai, 2002.	20,21,23,24,25



## 4. Results

### 4.1. Sample Profile

Respecting the literature review a questionnaire was developed to assess the possibility of developing an online Persian information network based on the participants' approach and attitude. The sample was composed of 201 individuals (106 women, 52.7%; 95 men, 47.3%). Ten percent of participants were between 18 to 25 years of age, 40.8% were between 26 to 35 years, 37.3% between 36 to 50 and 11.9% were above 50 years old. The majority of women (74%) were in 26-35 years old group; however the majority of men were in 26-35 and 36-50 years old groups with 41% and 37% of men participants, respectively. Around 62% of the respondents were married, 30.8% reported to be single, 5% were divorced and 2% were separated. About 39% of the population had graduate degree (MA, MSc or PhD), within which 39.6% (42) were women and 37.8% (36) were men. This is followed by bachelor degree (28.3%), high school or equivalent (13.9%), associate degree (7%), undergraduate student (7.9%) and 4.5% with less than high school degree. These results are in line with previous investigations on Iranian immigrants such as Moghaddam et al. (1987) and Naghdi (2010), who addressed Iranian immigrants as highly educated population. Regarding the employment status, 53.7% of the participants were employed with 42.8% reporting full-time and 10.9% part-time jobs. Around 20% of the sample reported to be unemployed and looking for job and 19.4% were students. The majority of the sample (54.7%) was living in European countries, 22.9% in the United States, 15.4% in Canada, 4.5% in Australia or New Zealand and 2.5% were living in Asian countries. Personal or family issues (35.9%) and educational purposes (32.8%) were the most mentioned reasons of emigration based on the participants' answers. This rate is followed by 7.4% of emigrations due to political issues, 4.4% profession-related migration and 3.5% for economic reasons or financial investment. Sixteen percent of the respondents however chose "other reasons" as the cause of their immigration (Table 2 & 3).



Table 2. Demographic characteristics of participants

Characteristic	Number	Percent
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	106	47.3
Male	95	52.7
Total	201	100.0
<b>Age</b>		
18-25	20	10.0
26-35	82	40.8
36-50	75	37.3
Above 50	24	11.9
Total	201	100.0
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	62	30.8
Married	125	62.2
Divorced	10	5.0
Separated	4	2.0
Widow	-	-
Total	201	100.0
<b>Education</b>		
Less than high school	9	4.5
High school or equivalent	28	13.9
Some college courses	15	7.5
Associate degree	14	7.0
Bachelor degree	57	28.3
Graduate degree	78	38.8
Total	201	100.0

Sample size: 201



Table 3. Demographic characteristics of participants

Characteristic	Number	Percent
<b>Employment Status</b>		
Full time	86	42.8
Part time	22	10.9
N/Looking for job	43	21.4
Student	39	19.4
Retired	3	1.5
Disabled	8	4.0
Total	201	100.0
<b>Location of Residency</b>		
US	46	22.9
Europe	110	54.7
Canada	31	15.4
Australia/New Zealand	9	4.5
Asia	5	2.5
Africa	-	-
Total	201	100.0
<b>Reason of Immigration</b>		
Economic/ financial	7	3.5
Education	66	32.8
Professional	9	4.4
Political	15	7.4
Personal/ family	72	35.9
Other reasons	32	16.0
Total	201	100.0

Sample size: 201

## 4.2. Migration-related Challenges during Emigration Process

The demographic exploration of the sample then is followed by investigating the factors influencing the process of immigration. The participants responded about their type of residence permit at their initial stage of immigration and 50.7% reported to have legal and temporary residency, 25.9% were refugee immigrants, 21.9% had legal and permanent residency and 1.5% of population indicated to have illegal residency (Figure 1). Participants were also asked to report their age at the time of immigration. The majority of the population (47.8%) indicated to be between 26 to 35 years, followed by 21.9% who were between 28 to 25, 20.9% between 36 to 50, 7.5% under 18 years and 2% were above 50 years when they left their homeland (Figure 2). Approximately half of the participants (49.8%) immigrated lonely and the rest were with their family (48.3%) or friends (2%) during their migration (Figure 3). For length of stay, 12.4% of the respondents resided in host country less than one year, 14.9% resided between 1 to 2 years, 32.3% reported their residency duration between 3 to 5 years, 19.9% settled in between 6 to 10 years and 20.4% resided more than 10 years (Figure 4).

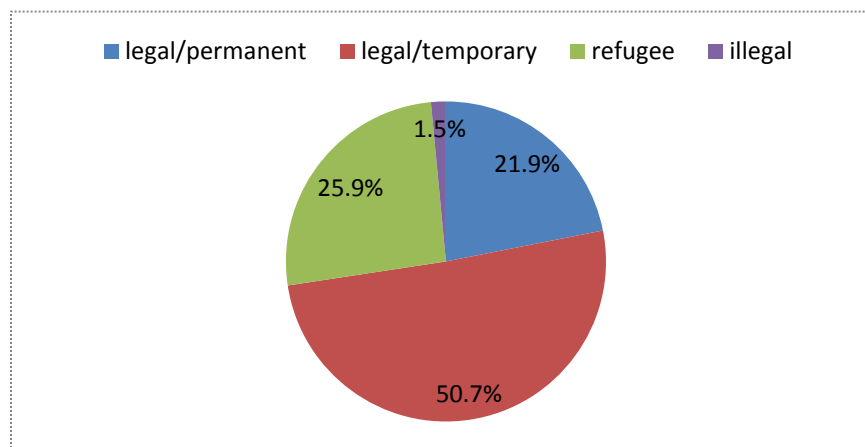


Figure 1. Type of residency

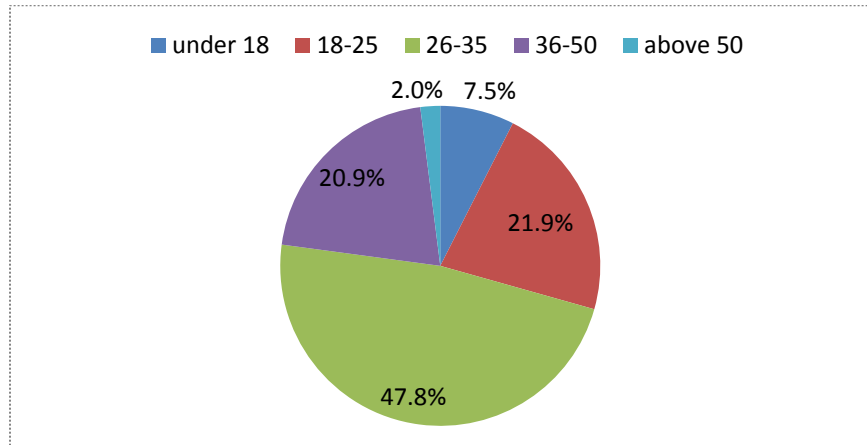


Figure 2. Age at the time of migration

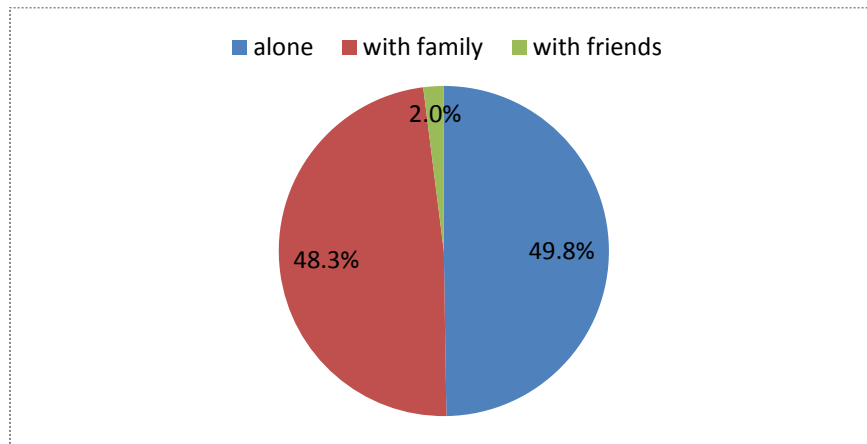


Figure 3. Family status at the time of migration



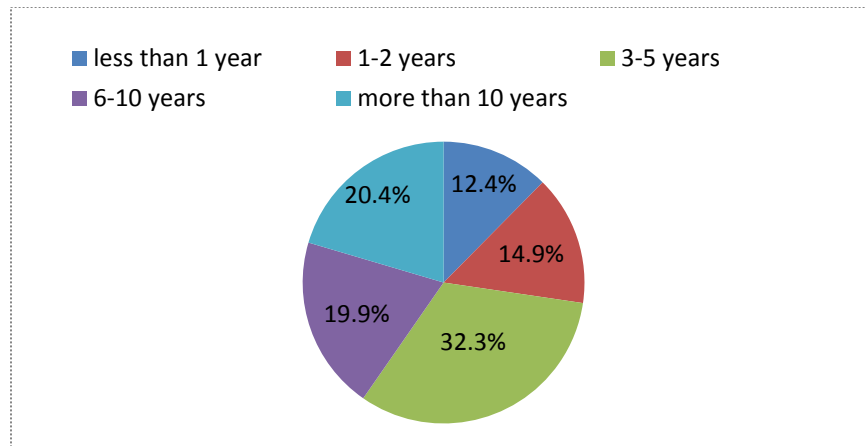


Figure 4. Length of residency in the host country

The participants then were asked about the level of acclimatization to the host country and making friends in a new society. The findings show that while 92.5% of population had positive experiences in terms of acclimatization (with 53.7% “yes” and 38.8% “rather yes”; Figure 5), this rate is quite high for those who were in the range of 18 to 35 years of age at the time of migration (Table 4). Out of 7.5% of the participants who responded “no” to the acclimatization question, the majority belonged to the oldest (above 50 years) and youngest (under 18 years) age groups. This indicates that acclimatization process is easier for youth individuals. The participants who migrated as refugee also appeared to have more difficulties for their adjustment to the new society compare to the other groups of our sample (Table 5).

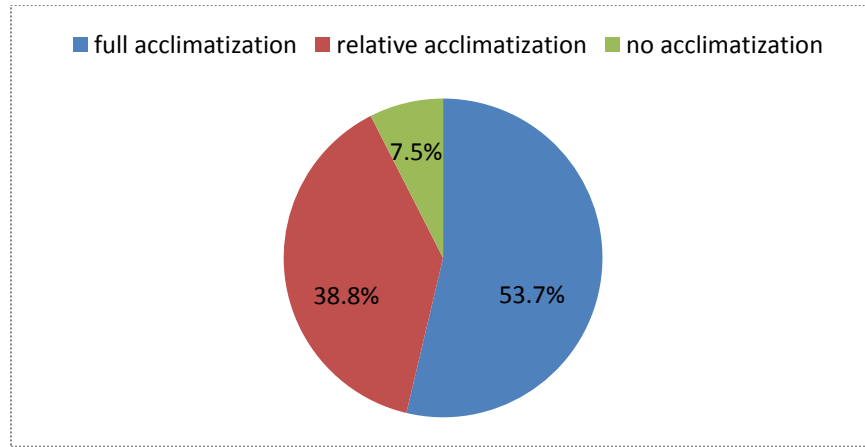


Figure 5. Level of acclimatization in the host country

Table 4. Percentage of acclimatization success in new place based on the participants' age at the time of migration

Age	Full acclimatization	Relative acclimatization	No acclimatization	Total
under 18	40.0 (6)	46.7 (7)	13.3 (2)	100.0 (15)
18-25	75.0 (33)	25.0 (11)	-	100.0 (44)
26-35	47.9 (46)	43.7 (42)	8.4 (8)	100.0 (96)
36-50	50 (21)	40.5 (17)	9.5 (4)	100.0 (42)
above 50	50.0 (2)	25.0 (1)	25.0 (1)	100.0 (4)

Sample size: 201

Number of participants for each group are in parenthesis

Table 5. Percentage of acclimatization success in new place based on the participants' residency status

Residency status	Full acclimatization	Relative acclimatization	No acclimatization	Total
Permanent	68.2 (30)	29.5 (13)	2.3 (1)	100.0 (44)
Temporary	55.9 (57)	35.3 (36)	8.8 (9)	100.0 (102)
Refugee	36.5 (19)	50.0 (26)	13.5 (7)	100.0 (52)
Illegal	-	100.0(3)	-	100.0 (3)

Sample size: 201

Number of participants for each group are in parenthesis

The respondents' answers with regard to making friend show that 42.8% of the participants have made friend with fellow immigrants and their countrymen and 31.8% indicated to have almost the same number of friends from both their homeland and the country they now lived in. Around 13% of the sample stated to have more friends from the new society and 11.95% mentioned that they could not make any friends in the host country (Figure 6). This result is similar to previous question and shows that the youngest group of the sample as well as refugees and illegal immigrants were less successful in making friends within a new society (Tables 6 & 7). Moreover the participants who resided in a new country less than 1 year, reported to have the most difficulties regarding friendship and those who had the longest residency had the least percentage of problems for making relationship (Table 8).

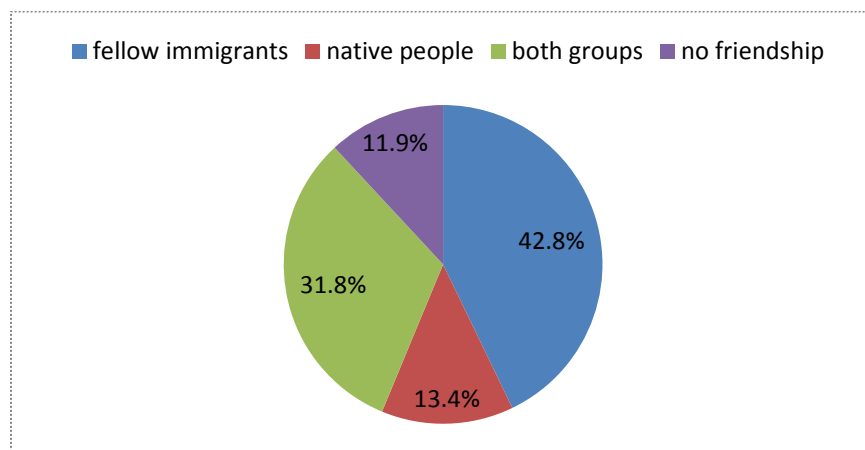


Figure 6. Majority of friendship within the host country

These results are consistent with the previous researches which indicated that some factors such as being younger, having a shorter duration of residency in a new country and lack of family support are related to lower integration and absorption in a new society that could lead to a higher level of depression (Alizadeh-Khoei et al., 2011; Hocking et al., 2015; Hosseini et al., 2017; Khavarpour & Rissel, 1997). The condition is even worse for refugees or illegal immigrants who face more difficulties in terms of entering the new environment. Therefore, the social networks can link Persian immigrants together and provide them a space in which they are

able to find people with the same background and situation. Since the Iranian immigrants are the minority groups in most countries, the virtual or physical communities of immigrants can fill the void of social supports and help them to interact and socialize with others, particularly at their initial stage of migration.

Table 6. Percentage of making friends with different populations in new place based on the participants' age at the time of migration

Age	Fellow immigrants	Native population	Both population	No friendship	Total
under 18	20.0 (3)	6.7 (1)	53.3 (8)	20.0 (3)	100.0 (15)
18-25	29.5 (13)	27.3 (12)	27.3 (12)	15.9 (7)	100.0 (44)
26-35	46.9 (45)	9.4 (9)	34.3 (33)	9.4 (9)	100.0 (96)
36-50	59.6 (25)	7.1 (3)	26.2 (11)	7.1 (3)	100.0 (42)
above 50	75.0 (3)	25.0 (1)	-	-	100.0 (4)

Sample size: 201

Number of participants for each group are in parenthesis

Table 7. Percentage of making friends with different populations in new place based on the participants' residency status

Residency status	Fellow immigrants	Native population	Both population	No friendship	Total
Permanent	61.4 (27)	6.8 (3)	25.0 (11)	6.8 (3)	100.0 (44)
Temporary	40.2 (41)	15.7 (16)	31.3 (32)	12.8 (13)	100.0 (102)
Refugee	30.8 (16)	15.3 (8)	36.6 (19)	17.3 (9)	100.0 (52)
Illegal	33.3 (1)	-	33.3 (1)	33.3 (1)	100.0 (3)

Sample size: 201

Number of participants for each group are in parenthesis



Table 8. Percentage of making friends with different populations in new place based on the length of residency in host country

Length of residency (year)	Fellow immigrants	Native population	Both population	No friendship	Total
less than 1	40.0 (10)	8.0 (2)	20.0 (5)	32.0 (8)	100.0 (25)
1 to 2	26.7 (8)	23.3 (7)	40.0 (12)	10.0 (3)	100.0 (30)
3 to 5	44.6 (29)	10.8 (7)	36.9 (24)	7.7 (5)	100.0 (65)
6 to 10	57.5 (23)	12.5 (5)	22.5 (9)	7.5 (3)	100.0 (40)
more than 10	39.0 (16)	17.1 (7)	36.6 (15)	7.3 (3)	100.0 (41)

Sample size: 201

Number of participants for each group are in parenthesis

### 4.3. Migration Impediments and Barriers

The next part of the questionnaire is designed to explore the impediments and barriers that the population has faced after migration. “Language barrier” with over 60% of the responses was the most frequent answer among the other obstacles. “Finding a job” and “economic difficulties” were the next barriers that participants encountered in the new society, with 52.2% and 45.8% respectively. Around 40% of the participants stated to have difficulties in terms of ‘making friends’ and 32.8% mentioned the “settlement-related issues” such as finding a house, buying a car or finding school for children as the problems that they have faced during their early stages of migration. About 31% of the respondents found the “cultural differences” as a barrier in the host country and 25.9% encountered “difficulties regarding gaining necessary information” about the new environment. 11.4% of the sample also confronted impediments in terms of “finding ethnic communities (Figure 7). Furthermore, we specifically asked about the participants’ language proficiency and 29.4% of the population stated to be quite novice, following by 20.9% who had just basic knowledge of foreign language. About 28% indicated to be at intermediate level and 21.4% had professional skill of the host country language (Figure 8).



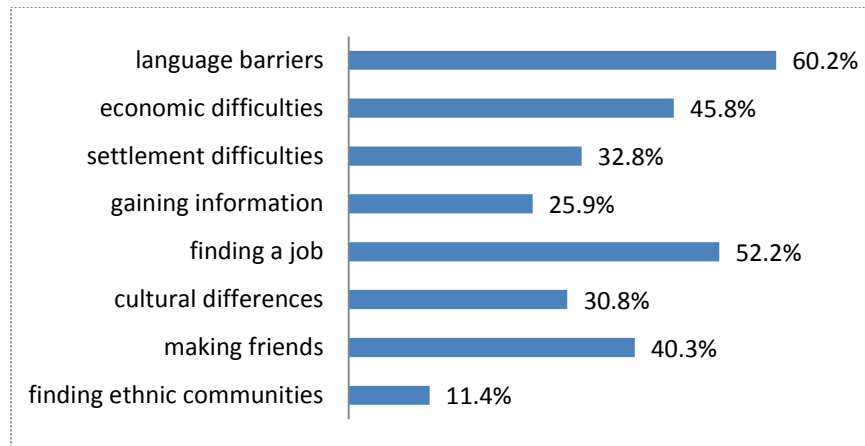


Figure 7. Barriers and impediment in the host country

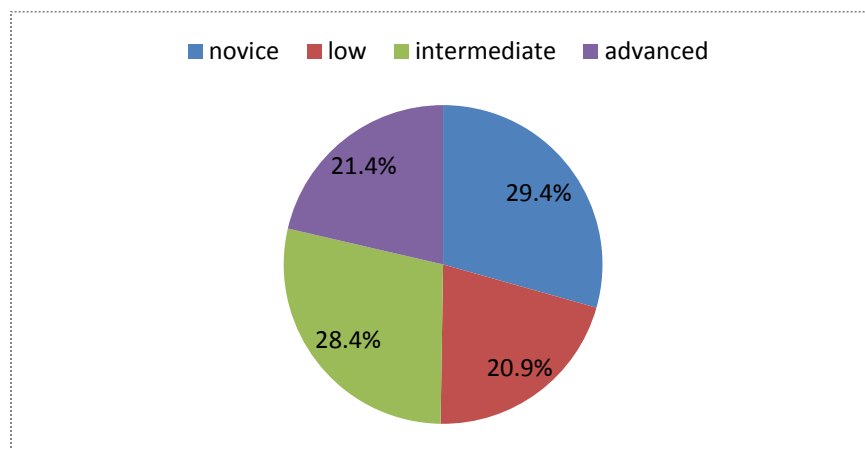


Figure 8. Level of foreign language proficiency

These results are in line with previous studies which stated that language barrier represents the main impediments for immigrants (Belot & Ederveen, 2012; Adsera & Pytlikova, 2012). Our findings indicate that almost half of the sample had no knowledge of foreign language and more than two-third had difficulties, not being fluent or professional in new language. Language barrier can affect all aspects of immigrants' life regarding every small or big issue during the post-migration life of immigrants. Most of the obstacles such as finding job and economic integration, gathering information about the new society and socializing with other people can somehow derive from lack of ability in knowing language. All these barriers can lead to

hindering immigrants' integration into the host country and increase the feeling of being outsider.

#### 4.4. Role of Internet and Media

The following section of the survey was designed to investigate the role of internet and media in the daily life of Iranian immigrants. The participants were asked about the amount of time (hours a day) they spend on internet and online media. While 38.3% responded that they spend 1 to 2 hours a day online, the same number of the respondents (38.3%) mentioned to spend 3 to 5 hours on internet and media. About 19% of the population was online daily for more than 5 hours and only 4% used internet for less than an hour a day (Figure 9). The sample then answered about the kinds of the online platforms they mostly use to gain information about their new environment. "Websites and social media of host country" had the highest score among the other choices (71.1%). "Asking the host country native friends" was the next choice with 43.8% of the participants. Over 39% of the population considered "the Persian websites and media" and 37.8% selected "asking Persian fellow-immigrants" as the ways of gathering information (Figure 10).

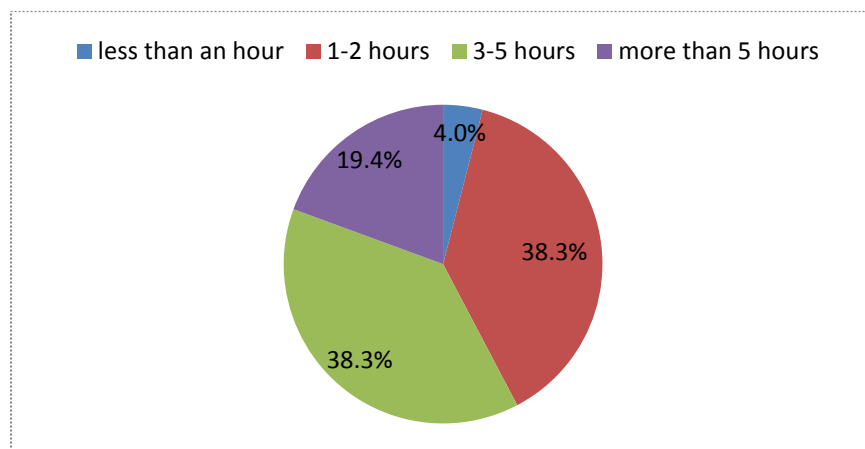


Figure 9. Daily online activity

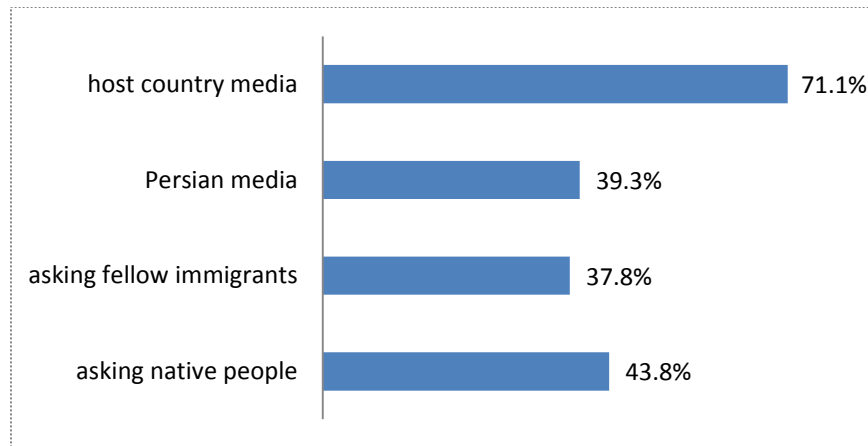


Figure 10. Information source

We can conclude from these findings that although over half of the participants had no knowledge of foreign language (according to the questions from previous section), they kept using the media of their host country or asking native people as their first options of acquiring information. This could be due to the fact that there is no comprehensive database available in Persian language and there are also difficulties in terms of finding fellow immigrants, which leave them with no option than referring to host country accessible resources.

Results from the next question also reveal similar outcomes as 42.8% of the participants preferred to use English for seeking information on internet. While 22.4% of the respondents chose Persian language as their preferable language, 20.9% of the sample selected the host country language and 13.9% stated that there is no preference concerning any specific language for acquiring necessary information (Figure 11). Since 60% of our participants resided in non-English speaking countries, we can consider two main reasons for these responses. First, English is the second language after Farsi language, being taught in Iran's schools for all students during their secondary and high school. Therefore, most of the Iranians have at least the intermediate knowledge of English language and it is the language that they feel most comfortable to look for information on internet. Secondly, there are more English resources available rather than other languages on a broad spectrum of topics on internet. However, since the immigrants need the



specific and detailed information about the new environment, they may end up surfing host country media to meet their needs and navigate themselves in the new society.

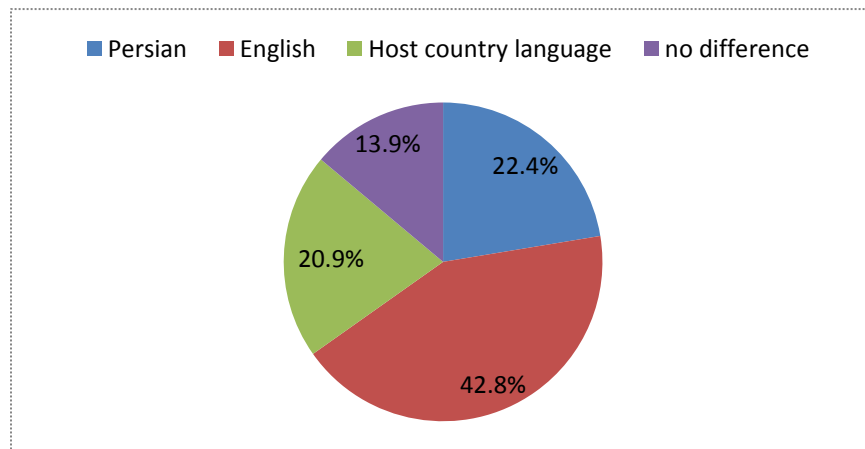


Figure 11. Preferred language

#### 4.5. Willingness to Contribute and Use a Persian Information Network

The last section of the survey is about evaluating the participants' willingness toward using a Persian information network and their contribution to that network as well as identifying the desirable categories and features for such a website from their point of view. In this respect, the participants were asked if they are interested in using a Persian language information website in order to obtain information of the host country they were living in. The majority of the sample (48.3%) responded "yes", following by 24.9% who selected "maybe" in response to this question and 26.9% were reluctant to use such a network according to our survey (Figure 12). The participants then were requested to choose all their desirable categories of information that they would prefer to be provided on the website. Local business information including Persian immigrants' businesses specifically with 68.2% of responses had the highest demands among the categories. Information for the upcoming events such as concerts, festivals and theaters was the next preferred listing with 64.7% responses. Information for attractions including sightseen and landmarks, museums, nature and parks with 53.2%, information of health and medical centers with 46.3%, real states information with 44.3%, information regarding public services and

government with 36.8% and religious organization information with 12.9% of responses were the next selective categories based on our sample opinions (Figure 13).

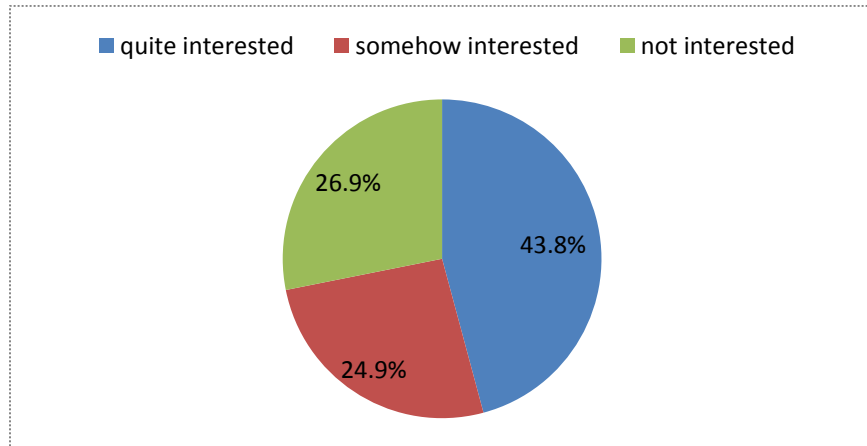


Figure 12. Attitude toward using the network

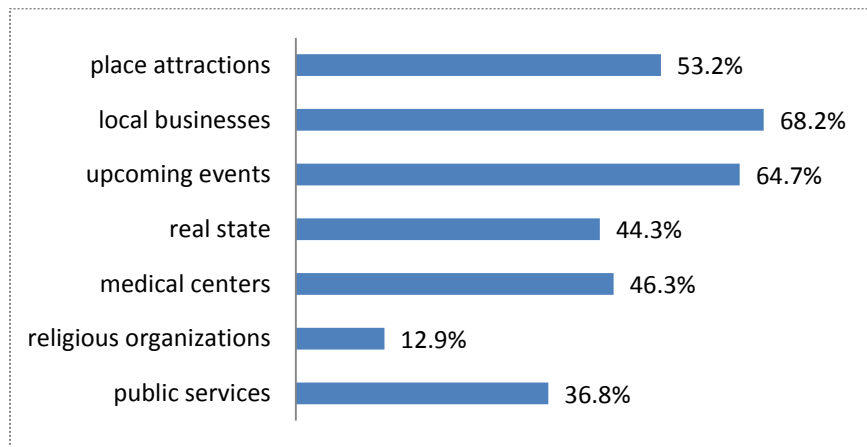


Figure 13. Desirable categories

Regarding the participants' tendency for providing review option on each item of information, the majority of the participants reacted positively to this feature with 61.7% of the sample responding "yes" and 15.9% choosing "maybe", while 22.4% reported not to be interested in such an option (Figure 14). Moreover, the sample was asked to clarify if they are willing to



contribute in adding their information and experiences on such a website. The findings show that 56.7% of the participants were eager to share their knowledge and experiences, following by 24.4% who responded they may take part in presenting their information on such a website. About 19% of the respondents however stated to be unwilling to contribution (Figure 15).

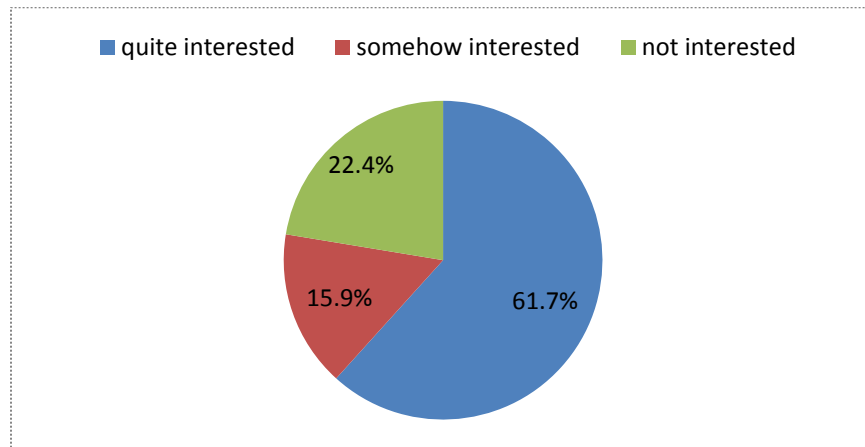


Figure 14. Peer-to-peer reviews

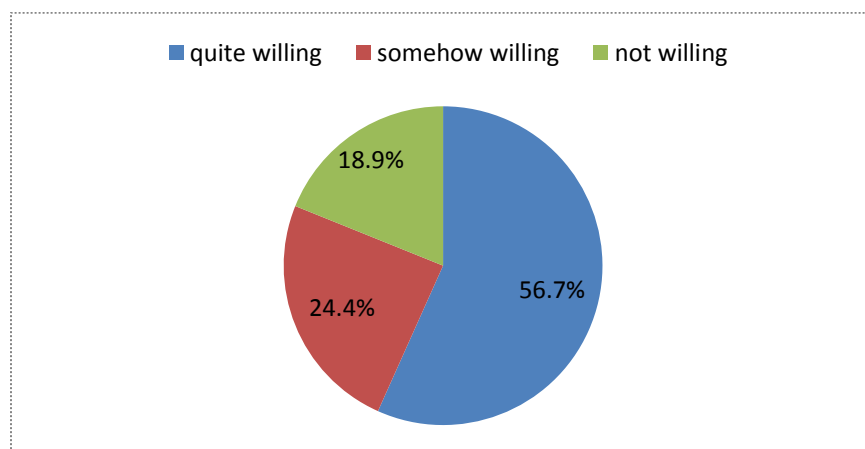


Figure 15. Willingness toward contribution

Regarding the engagement motivation in such a website, 64.7% of the participants selected using the fellow immigrants' experiences and reviews on listings, 52.7% of the participants reported they are motivated to share their own information and experiences and 50.7% were motivated to acquire information about the host country from such a network. Finding the other fellow immigrants and talking to them with 40.3% of responses was the next reported motivation based on the participants' answers (Figure 16). The last two questions were allocated to assess the potential business owner's interest in providing their career information and running their business advertisements on such a website. Over 45% of the population reported their tendency towards presenting their business or skills information on this website and 35.8% selected "maybe" in reply to this question. Rest of the respondents stated not to be interested in using this feature (Figure 17). Regarding the business and profession-related advertisements, 31.7% of the respondents mentioned that they would take advantage of this option following by 39.7% who indicated they might be willing to do so. Around 28% of the sample however reported to be reluctant on running advertisements (Figure 18). These results demonstrate that the majority of our sample had positive attitude toward the usage of a Persian information network with the purpose of exchanging knowledge and experiences among Iranian immigrants.

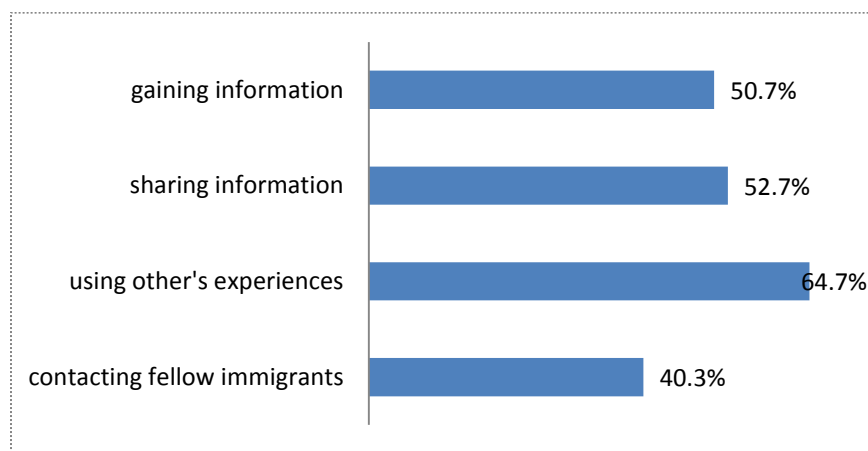


Figure 16. Motivation

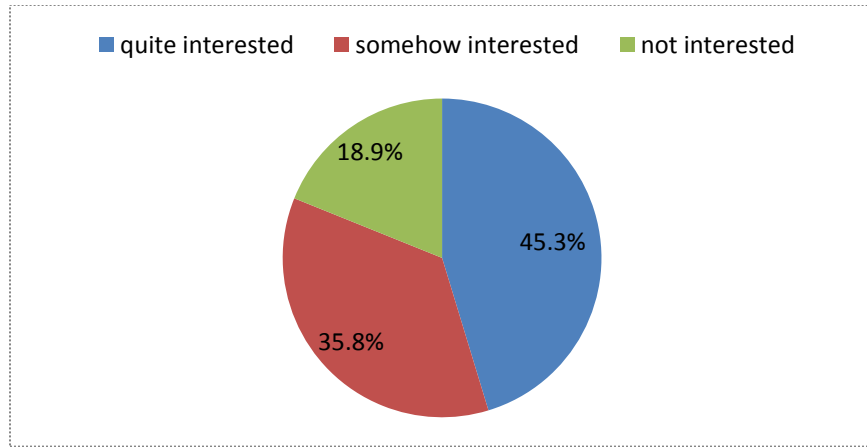


Figure 17. Attitude toward listing own business and profession information

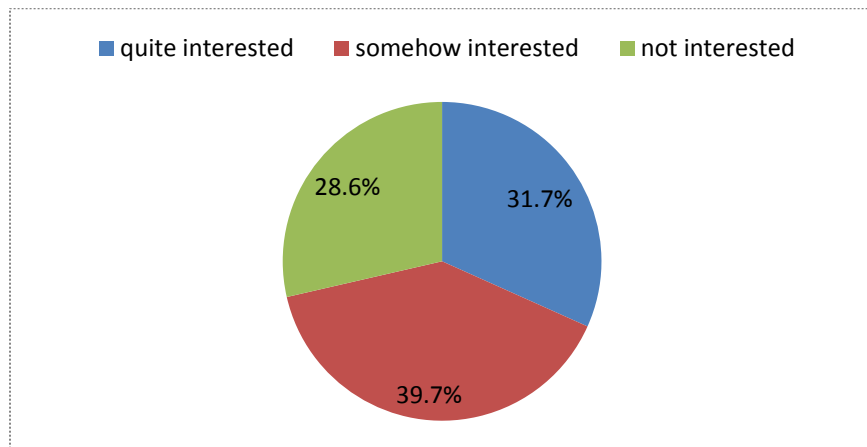


Figure 18. Attitude toward running advertisement

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

Today, Iran is a country with a high number of immigrants and this migration rate is increasing due to political, social, economic and environmental issues. This trend which has intensified following the Islamic revolution in 1979 has forced a lot of Iranians to leave their homeland and formed different social communities all over the world. Persian immigrants as minority groups in most countries usually suffer from lack of official supports and organizations, as Iran government has had no contribution to provide aids for Iranian expats. Considering this situation and in the absence of any formal aid and official institutions to help Iranian immigrants, the survival and integration of this population depends greatly on ethnic resources which act as tools to ease the transition of new arrivals as well as providing the possibility of keeping contacts with those from the same culture and background.

Our research shows that even with all the available and accessible information around, no comprehensive database is available for Persian immigrants which can meet their diverse needs of information. Where to settle, how to find communities, how the banking system works, how to deal with health system and health insurance and many other sorts of information that range from general to more specific topics are needed to be satisfied in order to facilitate the adaptation of Iranian immigrants within the new society. Since the language barrier represents the most challenging issues for Iranian immigrants, having access to rich and reliable source of information which is presented in their mother tongue can help them to cope with migration-related obstacles. Refugees who have difficulties in terms of using official information sources can specifically benefit from such an ethnic media. Another function of an ethnic network is providing a stage for ethnic businesses and those who have special skills to present their occupations to ethnic consumers.

Regarding this fact that immigrants from the same culture and background usually share similar tastes and needs for goods and services, an ethnic network can be useful for both business and skill owners and the consumers as well. For example in a study by Bozorgmehr and Moeini (2016), it is indicated that Iranians are twice as likely to be self-employed than all Americans. In this respect, such ethnic media can act as an economic enterprise as well as social institution which provide the new form of word of mouth or face-to-face interactions. It is even more



important at their initial stages of migration while they might not be able of acquiring their desirable professions, helping them to cope with social isolation and loneliness.

Leisure-related information is another function of this network which can help Iranian immigrants to find necessary information and use the others' experiences and knowledge regarding different places and activities. Previous studies stated that leisure can have a significant impact on immigrants' adaptation to a new environment and help them to cope with their stress (e.g. Juniu, 2002; Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004; Tirone & Pedlar, 2000). Lack of familiarity with new environment is one of the barriers for most of immigrants and leisure activities provide them with the opportunities to socialize and connect with other members of their new community.

This network therefore could be useful for all Iranian immigrants, not only the newcomers, but also those who have already been integrated, as it presents the updated information regarding carriers and businesses, leisure activities, upcoming events and so forth. In this regard, we aim to develop a user-generated content (UGC) website in order to engage the consumers for value co-creation purposes. We will focus on social interaction as well as technical features of the system to encourage as more as possible users to engage and contribute to the network. Research has shown that social interactions facilitate user experiences within user generated content websites, provide the individuals groundwork to express their attention to other consumers' needs and interests (Jensen & Aanestad, 2006; Kettinger & Lee, 1994; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a; Wixom & Todd, 2005).

The technical feature is another factor that has a great impact on user experience within the network. The ability of integrating content within the UGC website, the easiness of retrieving information and interacting with other users and the flexibility and efficiency of features to meet the most possible needs of consumers as well as having the potential to be used for multiple purposes are the main components of a well-designed and user-friendly website (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a). The engagement rate of individuals however greatly depends on their technical, social and personal traits.



Furthermore, we had an evaluation on listing review in our survey which is one of the most important features for internet-based businesses. Peer-to-peer reviews enable consumers to obtain reputable information from other users and give them a credible indicator for judgments on different pieces of information. Since the value of information significantly depends on verification and confirmation by other customers, the reviews help the users to discover the hidden quality of information on different items. It can include a broad range of information from all the businesses such as restaurants, mechanics and barber's shop to the hotels, vacation destinations and so forth. Yelp.com is an example of using this feature by providing an environment where consumers can communicate about their experience at a particular business. The Yelp team figured out that recommendations from customers have the largest influence on their purchasing decisions (Tucker, 2011).

Accordingly, we intend to develop an online information network to meet the Iranians needs for information in their new society based on the results from our survey, the careful observation of Iranian immigrants around and doing online research to recognize their needs, barriers and their expectation for such a network. In this respect, we will create a supportive environment for resources integration by focusing on technical features of the network and improve the quality of social interaction between different actors. We consider the consumers' expectations and motivations to utilize the full potential of co-creation and to serve our users better. We wish to assist the Iranian immigrants to cope with difficulties and challenges after their migration and help them to absorb and take their deserved position within the new society as soon as possible.





## 6. Project: The Website

This study has proposed research to evaluate the possibility of developing an online information network for Persian speaking immigrants in order to meet the Iranian immigrants' needs of information and facilitate their integration and acculturation process in the host country. Our findings showed that the majority of our sample had positive attitude toward using and contributing to a network in their mother tongue, as language barrier represents the most challenging issue, affecting all other aspects of their post-migration life. Accordingly, we developed a website including all the necessary information for this population based on our investigation and survey results analyses. The first version of our website is now accessible through [www.wikinterest.com](http://www.wikinterest.com) to all Persian speaking people who are looking for information regarding different categories and places all around the world.

Considering the fact that our users may vary greatly regarding their age, education and the technical and social traits, our main objective was to developing a website which is quite easy and simple in terms of function and usability. It is designed in a way to enable diverse actors integrating their resources including their knowledge and experiences through distributing user-generated contents. The website will provide information ranging from local businesses to medical centers to upcoming events in order to satisfy the Iranian immigrants' needs of information.

The developed website is a web directory which lists entries on businesses and locations and their contact information. Six main categories of information are presented on the website and each listing is consisted of some other related sub-categories (Figures 19 & 20). The first category is allocated to businesses and services such as mechanics, lawyers, rent car agencies, baby sitters and so forth. The second one includes restaurants, coffee shops and bars' information. The third list covers the public and private medical centers. The forth group is consisted of events, arts and entertainments such as theaters, festivals and exhibitions. The fifth category is contained of landmarks and accommodations' information and the last one presents the information of governmental, religious and shopping centers. Business and service listing which was the highest demanding category based on our survey responses, includes the Iranian



businesses or professions information in addition to local businesses which are suggested by our users.

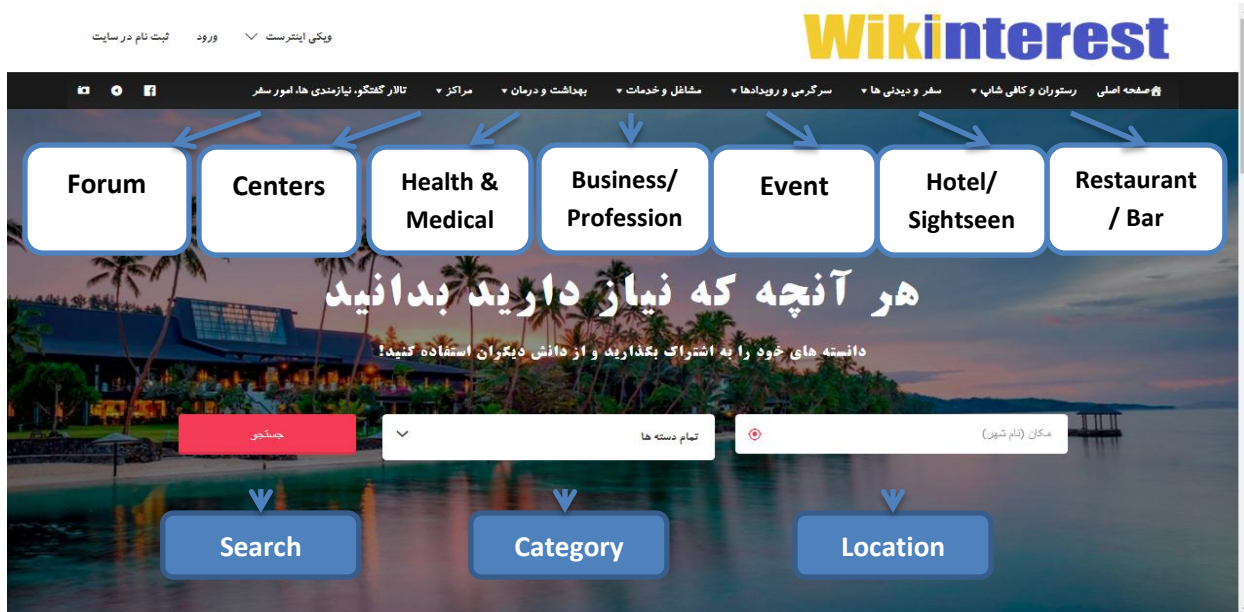


Figure 19. Home Page of Website with English Translated Captions



Figure 20. Search and Result Page with English Translated Captions

The website enables the users to contribute in richness of the network either with creating contents or reviewing and rating the provided items. In this respect they can leave feedback on each item as well as rating them through reviewing feature. This will allow users to evaluate the accuracy and quality of shared knowledge. It also provides them a stage in which they can engage actively to have richer social experience and generates great opportunities for value co-creation within our online network.

Based on the nature of listing, information such as address, location on map, telephone number, website or email and working hours are presented on devoted page of every item (Figure 21). All information of each listing which is generated by the users would be evaluated and confirmed by our moderator team before publishing on the website. The users can search for specific information through particular category and location.

Forum is another feature of the website which allows users to talk and share their knowledge on a broad range of topics such as housing, education, hiring opportunities, banking and finance, health system, driving license, legal information and government-related issues (Figure 22). It also acts as a bridge between Iranian immigrants by enabling them to contact with each other and have social interactions while they may suffer of feeling loneliness in a new society. The forum is organized based on topics and locations to give easier access to users who are looking for certain subjects.





Figure 21. Listing Information Page with English Translated Captions

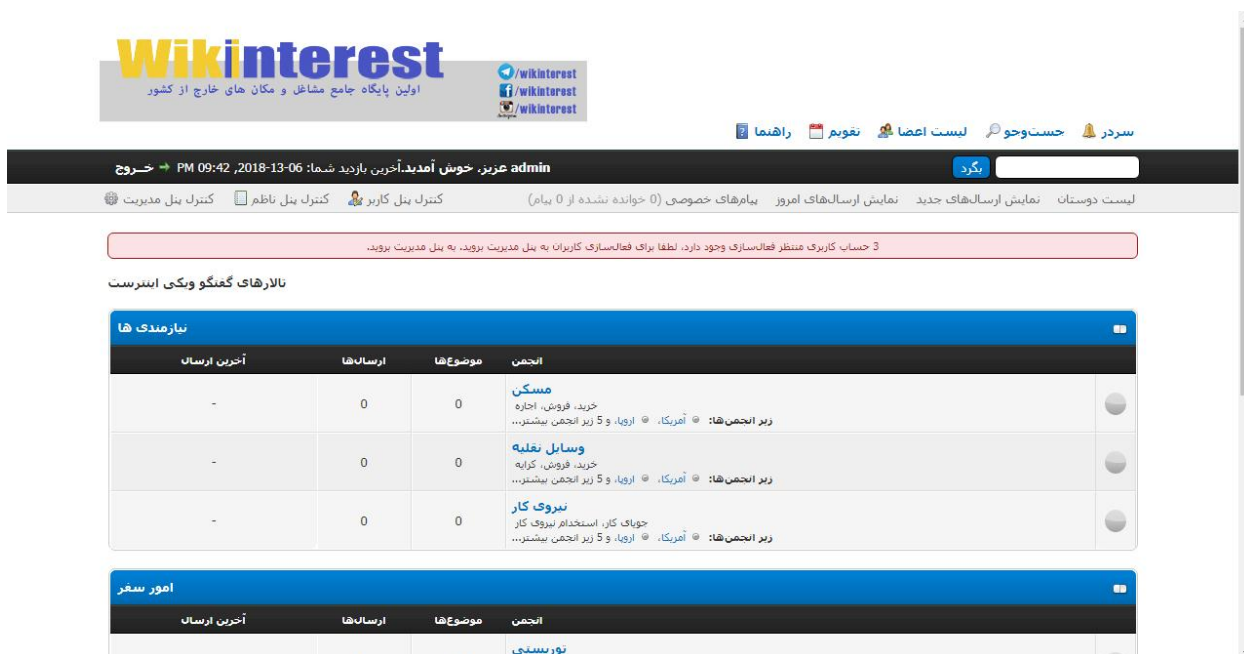


Figure 22. Forum

We named the website “Wikinterest” which is the combination of Wiki plus Interest, as it is the place where all the users can find and share the information regarding their choices of interest.

Given the platform as a multi-sided business, the value would be proposed to all engaged partners including the shareholders, business owners and other users. Selling ads to local businesses and profession owners would be the source of revenue for the firm. The business owners would benefit from advertising as well as prioritizing of their business to appear first on given search in order to promote their business and increase revenues. Discovering the useful information and interacting with fellow immigrants would advantage the users by meeting their needs of information and communication. The active reviewers and content creators would also be rewarded with some incentives offered by Wikinterest.

At the current state, we have performed the first version of the website to recognize the bugs and errors during testing the functions and adoptability of all elements. The main purpose is to propose a user-friendly website to build sustain relationship with existing and potential consumers which leads to higher level of engagement. Once we complete this step, it would be essential to turn to the marketing phase in order to reach our target group.

By performing this project, we are hoping to take a positive step in order to meet the Iranian immigrants’ needs of information and mitigate the difficulties of migration through providing social supports for these minority groups in their new country.



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## 8. Appendix

### 8.1. Questionnaire

#### 1-Gender

- Female
- Male
- 

#### 2-Age

- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-50
- Above 50

#### 3-Marital status

- Single
- Married
- Divorced
- Separated
- Widow

#### 4-Level of Education

- Less than high school degree
- High school degree or equivalent
- Some college courses but no degree
- Associate degree
- Bachelor degree
- Graduate degree



#### 5- Employment status

- Employed, full time job
- Employed, part time job
- Not employed, looking for work
- Student
- Retired
- Disabled, not able to work

#### 6-Location of residency

- US
- Europe
- Canada
- Australia and New Zealand
- Asia
- Africa

#### 7-Reason of emigration?

- Economic/financial investment
- Education
- Professional
- Political
- Personal/ Family
- Other

#### 8- What type of residence permit did you first have?

- Legal – Temporary resident
- Legal- Permanent resident
- Refugee
- Illegal



9-How old were you when you emigrated from your homeland?

- Under 18
- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-50
- Above 50

10-How was your condition when you emigrated?

- Emigrated alone
- Emigrated with family
- Emigrated with friend/friends

11-How long have you been resided in the host country?

- Less than 1 year
- 1 to 2 years
- 3 to 5 years
- 6 to 10 years
- More than 10 years

12-Did you acclimatize in a new place?

- Yes
- Rather yes
- No

13-Which of the following population consists the majority of your friends?

- Fellow immigrants
- Natives in the host country
- About the same
- No friendship



14-What are the most important barriers you have faced in a foreign country? (Tick all that apply)

- Language impediments
- Difficulties for settlement in early stage such as finding the house, gaining information about neighborhood, etc.
- Finding information about the new environment
- Finding a job
- Cultural difference
- Making friendship and socializing with others
- Finding ethnic community
- Economic difficulties

15-What was the level of the foreign language at the time of emigration?

- Novice - I didn't know any phrases
- Low - I used just basic phrases
- Intermediate- I understood the text addressed to me and I was holding simple conversations
- Advanced- I communicated easily

16-How many hours a day are you spending on internet?

- Less than an hour
- 1-2 hours
- 3-5 hours
- More than five hours

17-Which of the following tools do you mostly use in order to gain information about your new place? (e.g., restaurants, medical centers, markets, renting and buying, etc.) (Select all that apply)

- Websites and social media of the host country
- Persian websites and media



- Asking fellow immigrants
- Asking native friends from the host country

18-Which of the following language do you prefer for seeking information on internet?

- Persian
- English
- Host country language (if not in an English speaking country)
- No preference

19-Are you interested in using a Persian information website in order to gain information of the new place?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

20-If YES, what kind of information do you prefer to be provided on the website (Select all that apply)

- Place attractions such as sightseen and landmarks, museums, nature and parks, etc.
- Local business including Persian immigrants businesses specifically
- Upcoming events such as concerts, Festivals, theaters, etc.
- Real state
- Health and medical centers
- Religious organization
- Public services and government

21-Do you prefer to see reviews for the listings based on the other's experiences?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe





22-Are you willing to contribute in adding your information/experiences on such a website?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

23-What might motivate/attract you to use such a website? (Select all that apply)

- Getting information of the host country
- Sharing your own information/experiences and your point of view
- Using the other fellow immigrants experiences and opinions about locations and services
- Finding the other fellow immigrants and talking with them

24-Are you willing to offer your skills and profession on such a website?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

25-Are you willing to advertise your business or profession on such a website?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

