SMART AJUMMA: A STUDY OF WOMEN AND TECHNOLOGY
IN SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA

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Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

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Abstract

The *ajumma* is one of the most misunderstood categories in Korean culture. Roughly translated as a woman that is married and middle-aged, the *ajumma* is one of the most stigmatized demographics in Korea today. This PhD project seeks to undercover some of the complex ways in which we might redefine the *ajumma* as a woman that has played a pivotal role in Korean culture post IMF bailout in 1997. Through exploring *ajummas* as new media users, this PhD project not only seeks to debunk the stereotypes around the category but also to provide a more nuanced study of gendered new media practice beyond the young-new media “digital natives” conflation in one of the countries lauded for new media innovation, Korea. This PhD project deploys an interdisciplinary model of the research that combines academic practices (e.g. a dissertation) and creative practices (e.g. *Digital Ppal-let-ter* video project and Smart *Ajumma* blog).

Research Question

Who is an *ajumma*, what do *ajummas* do and how are *ajummas* represented in Korea today?

Through a discourse analysis, qualitative fieldwork and creative practice, this PhD project explores the ambiguous definition of the *ajumma* and her relationship to new media as a lens into understanding the contemporary relationship between women and technology in Korea. This project contributes to sociocultural approaches to media studies and creative practice.
Introduction

About one hundred million people inhabit the hectic business of everyday life in Seoul, the capital city of South Korea (henceforth Korea). As usual, the subway is packed with commuters waiting for a space. Eventually, a space is emptied and everyone’s eyes are on that seat. Suddenly, a middle-aged woman throws her handbag onto the empty seat while scampering to take her place in the seat. Her movement is rapid and swift. She is an ajumma with typically permed curly hair, sporting a flower printed top and she runs as fast as Usain Bolt.

This opening scene paints one of the most typical scenarios of the ajumma in Korea. In this context the image of the ajumma is drawn as sarcastic and comical—a typical depiction within Korean culture whereby ajummas are described as middle-aged women who are disorderly, loud, shameless and technological outsiders in Korean society. However, this is not an accurate depiction of the ajumma. Various media in Korea such as TV dramas, TV commercials and films tend to present images of the ajumma in sarcastic and two-dimensional forms. However, ajummas should be viewed in greater depth: they are the backbone of the family and have been silently running the country over the years. And yet the ridicule around the group ajumma highlights the tenacity of patriarchal culture within Korean society. Who, then, is an ajumma?

Ajumma is a pronoun that means middle-aged and married women but it is more likely to be used as a proper noun that only exists and is used in Korea. The word, ajumma, is registered in the Korean standard unabridged dictionary and is defined as a middle-aged (approximately mid-30s to late-60s) married woman in the broadest sense of the word in Korea. This is the generally accepted definition of ajumma in Korea, however the exact meaning of ajumma cannot be defined so narrowly. Rather, we need to conceptualise the ajumma as a nuanced part of Korean society, culture
and history. Through understanding the complex and subtle meanings around *ajumma*, we can begin to gain greater comprehension of the gendered and generational ways in which media, society and history are playing out in contemporary Korea.

In this thesis, I examine what *ajumma* means and how *ajumma* influences Korean society, culture, history, communication and technology. In particular, focusing upon *ajummas’* use of new media technologies—such as smartphones, SNS (Social Network Service like Kakao Story), instant messaging (e.g. Kakao Talk), blogs and diverse online and offline communities—and how this reflects online practices, this thesis explores how the *ajumma* engage with new technologies as not only a communication form but also as a means to create their own forms of expression and creativity.

In order to argue for a more nuanced understanding of *ajumma* this thesis will contextualise the various facets of new media technologies influencing contemporary everyday life. By drawing on feminist STS (Science and Technology Studies) work on the Internet and mobile technologies I re-frame these general debates within the specific context of Korean culture. In particular, this thesis seeks to situate *ajumma* as an important symbol of changes around gendered practices in Korea post 1997 (IMF bailout). Through looking at *ajummas’* use of new media, especially through the use of smartphones, this thesis quashes the notion of young people as digital natives. This is especially important in the context of Korea with its reputation as an IT powerhouse with the highest Internet access rate and the highest penetration rate (67 percent) of smartphones in the world as a percentage of population (Neilsen Research 2013, p.6). Indeed, Korea’s smartphone penetration rate reached 83 percent at the end of March in 2015 and it is ranked fourth in the world among 56 countries surveyed (DIGIECO 2015). Much of the research on Korean new media has focused upon young people’s adoption of new media (Yoon 2003). When gender has been explored (i.e. Dong-Hoo Lee’s work on camera phones, Lee 2005), again the focus has been young people.
This thesis examines one of the most overlooked yet important demographics in Korean culture, the *ajumma*, and her relationship to new media in order to debunk youth and new media conflations. This research investigates how the *ajumma* are becoming the “smart ajumma” through using new technologies like smartphones to build and keep their connections through constant communication in online communities. Through these activities *ajummas* become “smart ajummas” and they are encouraged to be more *ajummarous ajumma*. In other words, the usage of new technologies such as smartphones boosts *ajummas* to strengthen their own communities and the way of communication in both online and offline.

The use of smartphones led to changes in the way of communication among *ajummas* and helped bring new ways of communication into their everyday practices. However, the lack of research focusing upon *ajummas*’ use of new media technologies adds to the misunderstanding and prejudices about them in terms of smartphone usage. In keeping with Susan Sontag’s (2002) discussion of the difference between “looking” and “staring”, I argue that we need to start “looking” at the pervading negative images of *ajumma*. Rather than just “staring” at an important and yet stigmatised demographic, we must uncover the hidden ideologies through smartphone usage in everyday *ajumma* practice.

As described in the abstract, this PhD project deploys an interdisciplinary model of research that combines academic practices (e.g. a dissertation) and creative practices (e.g. *Digital Ppal-let-ter* video project and Smart *Ajumma* blog). This research project is about new media studies, feminism studies, East Asian studies (Korean studies), Cultural studies, etc. However, I focus more closely on media studies due to my academic background in media studies. Moreover, creative practices such as the *Digital Ppal-let-ter* video project and the Smart *Ajumma* blog not only draw on my multimedia experience but enhance my research into *ajummas* as a group and their use of
mobile technology. This research project is not an ephemeral, one-time project but rather an on-going project that can be expected to develop over time.
Chapter One

Gender and Technology

In order to address the role of *ajumma* as a controversial symbol for new media in Seoul, Korea, this section of the literature review will cover a few key areas: women and technology, telephony and women, a detailed discussion of women in Korea from before the 1997 International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout, Missy Syndrome, *Ajumma* in Korea, Mum vs *Ajumma*, Revolt of *Ajumma* and Smart *Ajumma*.

**Women and Technology**

In the realm of technology and in particular its use, women are often stereotyped as being uncomfortable and inefficient. Women are also referred to as an isolated group within the technology industry, which is mostly male dominated (Grint & Gill 1995). Carla Ganito explains that “society is co-produced with technology” (Ganito 2010, p.79). Ganito’s perspective highlights that gendered use of technology differs and is also reflected in the variations of gender performativity across societies. However, gender needs to be understood in terms of other factors such as education and class. Cockburn claims (1983, p.203) that “the construction of men as strong, manually able and technologically endowed, and women as physically and technically incompetent” is illustrative of dichotomous gender and technology divides that persist within many societies. The dichotomy accentuates the sexual division of technology as it perpetuates the stereotypes that women are essentially technology poor. Furthermore, women have been largely excluded from...
designing technology (Wajcman 2010). However, what needs to be observed is how and in what ways technologies are adopted differently by men, women and other genders.

Rakow and Navarro (1993, p.144-145) argue that “technologies have gendered persona (automobiles and ships as female) and are differentiated by the gender of users (washing machines for women, video cameras for men)”. These observations demonstrate that technologies have been designed, structured and used by different genders variously. Historically, the difference of social, economic and cultural background between different genders have played out in the necessities of technology. For example, the Internet was originally designed for military-industrial purposes in the 1960s (Naughton 1999) and a medium entrenched in “masculine codes and values” (Van Zoonen 1992, cited in Van Zoonen 2002, p.6). This indicates that it was a technology based on masculine preferences. The initial use of the Internet during 1990s to early 2000s was dominated by gender debates. As Margie Wylie (1995, p.3) notes: “make no mistake about it, the Internet is male territory. Considering its roots are sunk deep in academics and the military-industrial complex, that’s hardly surprising”. Women were an excluded group in the world of technology because of the social context at that time. Technologies which emerged during the industrial revolution were “more masculine” (Arnold & Faulkner 1985; Wajcman 1991, p.21). Hence, women were not the appropriate and preferred group to be engaged in technological discussion during that period in history.

The difference of power between men and women has lead to the creation of new classes referred to as those of workers and those of women (Cockburn 1985). Factories and machinery were designed by men for workers who were also men. Therefore, male-dominated power was a natural result during the early development of capitalism. As Wajcman (1991, p.162) discusses, technology is mostly “shaped by male power and interests”. Since the opening of the 20th century, women’s participation in designing and developing technology was exceptional compared to men’s. As a
result, women had to use male-oriented technology. For this reason, women were considered as the second-in-command group in the market of technology.

Although women were excluded from the market of male-dominated technology, the relationship between women and technology developed as women’s relationship with technology strengthened (Wajcman 1991, p.137). According to Wajcman (1991), feminist technology research has shown a significant relationship between women and technology since the 1980s. In fact, feminist technology research indicates that technology has been used broadly by women, mostly in household technologies such as vacuum cleaners, microwaves and landline telephones. Such household technologies effectively resulted in women spending a great part of their day doing housework. Whilst women and men use technology, women have their own patterns of technology use. For example, women use technology when they do household duties at home whereas men use technology as they conduct business affairs at the office.

It is evident that the means, patterns and purposes of using technology between men and women differ and that they cannot be compared with one another. Therefore, the use of technology cannot measure the relationship between women and men. Instead, women should join men in being considered technology users. Technology used to be defined by “What men do and women do not” (Oldenziel 2001, cited in Corneliussen 2011, p.11). However, Autumn Stanley suggests that the history and the definition of technology and gender needs to be changed from “What men do to what people do” (Stanley 1983, p.5). In other words, technology should not be categorised and discussed by dichotomous gender groups of men and women, it must be comprehended by a diversified group of people. For instance, even the group ‘women’ needs to be classified under various categories such as young women, old women, single women and married women.

Since new technologies were introduced to society, many social elements such as cultural background, social groups and even gender have influenced new technologies (Castells et al. 2007,
p. 39). In particular, technology and gender are linked to various elements including social and cultural background when they are developed and formed. Ganito stresses (2010, p.77) that “Gender is thus [a] cultural construction (Beauvoir, 1989: 12; Butler, 1999; Haraway, 1991) and in Simone de Beauvoir’s words, ‘one is not born, but rather becomes a woman’”. Such observations indicate that gender is constructed differently in different cultures; women are products of the society they are a part of. Thus, the relationship between technology and women cannot be explained simply through patterns of women’s use of or access to technology. On the contrary, it is necessary to understand the complex cultural, social and historical elements which affect the formation of women’s relationships with technology. Once this has been established, it has the capability of explaining how and why the patterns of women’s use of technology differ from men’s.

Teresa de Lauretis explores how gender is represented through the use of technology. She examines not only how “the representation of gender is constructed by the given technology, but also how it becomes absorbed subjectively by each individual whom that technology addresses” (Lauretis 2004, p.223, cited in Ganito 2010, p.79). The representation of gender is built by using a given technology which is shaped differently subject to gender. The landline telephone is a good example. It was not invented and designed purely for female users initially. However, the landline telephone allows women to keep their networks such as family and friends whilst doing household duties. In the past, when women took most of the responsibilities of being housewives they spent the greater part of each day at home. Therefore, the landline telephone let women keep their networks in order to avoid isolation. Concurrently, women were able to do housework without being isolated from the outside world. As a result, the landline telephone within the home was a significant tool, enabling women’s communication within a technological apparatus. This example shows that technology is used for different purposes and forms different patterns through its use
between different genders. In addition, technology is also shaped in various ways according to different genders.

In the early 1990s, the Internet was used by physicists and hobbyists who were mostly men, and consequently, the Internet and the computer became recognised as masculine technologies. However, times have changed. The rise of information and communication technologies (ICTs) such as mobile phones have helped to ensure that whilst not everyone owns a computer, they can still access the Internet via the mobile phone. Today women are common users of the Internet and have become “the majority of Internet users” (Flynn 2000, cited in Dempsey 2009, p.37).

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU 2012) report, Gender ICT statistics in 2012, indicates that there is not a big gap between male and female Internet users. According to statistics within the report, of the 2.8 billion Internet users in the world, 1.5 billion are male users and 1.3 billion are female. Whilst the report demonstrates that male Internet users currently exceed female Internet users the ITU expects that female Internet users will grow by 350 million in the next three years from 2012. As more women familiarise themselves with the Internet, the number of female Internet users will continue to grow. Dempsey stresses (2009, p.38) that “women’s exclusion from technological cultures continues to grow”. This confirms that women as a market are worth considering. Men used to be the main target customers for online marketing companies but a shift is occurring whereby female customers are becoming the core target of those companies nowadays. This reflects that more women are involved in using new technologies such as computers and the Internet. Furthermore, it can be deduced that there are factors which have triggered the growing attention given to female users of the Internet.

The use of technology should not be defined only within the prism of how men and women use technology differently. As Judy Wajcman suggests (2010), it is not the differences each gender experiences in relation to access to technology which should be the entire focus but rather how
Technology is developed and used between genders. At the same time, we need to consider how
gender is formed and developed through the process of using technology. Differences in using
technology between men and women are not inherent. Rather, technology is used and developed in
different ways according to the various purposes and reasons for the use of technology by both
genders. Furthermore, people’s diversified cultural, social, and historical backgrounds also affect
the development of technology and the user profile.

Technology used to be regarded as “male machines rather than female fabrics” (Oldenziel
1999, cited in Wajcman 2010, p.144). In other words, technology was the representation of male
dominance. The inference here is that it is easier to understand why technology became generally
known as male-dominated when cultural, social and historical backgrounds are taken into
consideration. In the past, industrialisation and mass production brought men to the factory and
machinery. Conversely, most women stayed at home as housewives to do household duties as per
Oldenziel’s ‘fabric’. This example demonstrates that men had more opportunities to use technology
due to their social and work circumstances during that time. For this reason, technology was
described and considered as the exclusive property of men. However, the relationship between
gender and technology should be reconsidered as the age of digital technology has currently arrived.

According to Plant (1998), digital technologies blur the boundaries between “humans and
machines, and between male and female, enabling their users to choose their disguises and assume
alternative identities” (cited in Wajcman 2010, p.147). This highlights the significantly different
character of previous technologies and new digital technologies. However, mobile phones seem to
assume a dichotomous and performative nature as far as gender is concerned. They can reinforce
traditional roles (Lemish & Cohen 2005) or perform new meanings (Lee 2005). Thus, when the
phone is used, humans and mobile phones constitute a “sociotechnical hybrid” (Ganito 2010, p.81).
For instance, Rakow and Navarro’s (1993, p.153) “remote mothering” reinforces women’s
traditional roles through the usage of mobile phone. Through using the mobile phone, women’s traditional role—often as mothers—can be challenged. However, it is a double-edged sword with the mobile phone being both a tethered leash as well as allowing mothers’ more flexibility (Frizzo-Barker & Chow-White 2012).

Women are able to take care of their children via mobile phones, as in remote mothering. In contrast, men can do business easier than ever before through the use of mobile phones. In other words, mobile phones extend the traditional gendered roles of men and women. This has been defined as “activity and technological appropriation for men and dependency and domesticity for women” (Lemish & Cohen 2005, p.511). While the mobile phone is convenient, providing men and women the ability to transcend time and space, practices still tend to be highly gendered. Parallels can be made between the patterns of usage of mobile phones by men and of landline phones by women, with “men stressing instrumental phone usage and women using it as a medium for personal and emotional exchange” (Cardoso et al. 2007, cited in Ganito 2010, p.81).

Like the important role of the landline telephone which enlarges and rearranges geographical and social spaces, develops the suburbs and connects individuals to the public and private spaces (De Sola Pool [1977] 1983), the mobile phone encourages women to extend their geographical and social boundaries. Furthermore, it enhances women’s social lives through communicating with their friends and family. Even though both men and women use mobile phones as convenient and instantaneous communication devices, the aspects of using mobile phones are significantly different between men and women. As Rakow and Navarro (1993, p.155) write, “men use it to bring the public world into their personal lives. Women tend to use it to take their family lives with them wherever they go”. The differences of using technology between women and men are not related to human attributes—rather it is about “gender ideology” (Rakow & Navarro 1993, p.155).
“Gender ideology” is developed and formed differently due to various elements such as social, cultural, historical and even political backgrounds. Therefore, it is natural that women and men use technology differently as they live different lives (Rakow & Navarro 1993). Furthermore, it can be inferred that different age groups of women use the same technology differently even if they are part of the same group of women. Thus, our perspective on the relationship between women and technology should focus more on particular social, cultural and historical factors that women have been involved in, rather than examining women from an incomplete viewpoint.

The Telephone and Women

In most contemporary societies, the telephone is an integral part of ICTs infrastructure. As a primary technology apparatus the telephone is used consistently throughout the world for communication and information delivery. When endeavouring to explain how women design their feminine technological world—which was tightly connected with women in the domestic sphere before the arrival of the broad use of mobile phones—the telephone stands as a good example (Rakow & Navarro 1993). Indeed, in the pre-Internet and pre-mobile phone days, the standard telephone was the only method for women to communicate with people outside their own houses. Nowadays it is more common for women to enter the workforce as well as take on most of the household duties relating to their families. For women, talking on the telephone was an ideal communication method without meeting face-to-face. Principally, women used the telephone to develop networks through constant communication with their friends, family members and other contacts.

Particular telephone studies have categorised telephone usage as “instrumental or task-oriented” and to do with “intrinsic or social motives” (Keller 1977; Noble 1987, cited in Wei & Lo
2006, p.56). These categories indicate how men and women differ in the ways they make use of the telephone. Amongst these two different categories the patterns of women’s use of the telephone to communicate with their friends can be explained as “intrinsic and social motives” (Keller 1977 & Noble 1987, cited in Wei & Lo 2006, p.56). This presumes that women look forward to communication via the telephone to maintain close relationships with their contacts. Women use the telephone for social motives to communicate with their friends or families and to build intimate relationships, as opposed to purely an instrumental tool for making appointments or seeking information as men tend to do (Wei & Lo 2006).

As Turkle (1988) explains, men and women approach the same technology with different attitudes due to their dissimilar necessities towards technology and what cultural meaning is attached to technology. For example, in the past women hardly used computers, compared to usage by men, as their circumstances did not necessitate it. For women who stayed at home undertaking home duties it was uncommon to communicate via email, blog or to chat online as is commonplace nowadays. Unlike today, Internet access at home was uncommon, and most computers were used for business purposes at workplaces. The example of computer usage can also be analogous to the different patterns of telephone usage between men and women. Women spend most time on the telephone talking with their friends at home while men hardly used the telephone when they were at home for the purposes of talking with their friends.

Thus, one of the reasons why women initially rejected certain technologies such as the computer was due to lack of accessibility and relevance as opposed to having a “phobia” (Turkle 1988, p.41-61). In the early days of computing, computers were far removed from the networked society of today as they were mainly used for mathematics and physics. The domestication of computing technology emerged with the videogame console which was manufactured for home use (Haddon 1999).
Historical and social factors impact the gendered use of technologies (Na 2001) and the telephone is no exception. As Rakow (1992, p.1) states, “the telephone provides a network for gender work (social practices that create and sustain individuals as women or men) and gendered work (productive activity assigned to women)”. While men do business on the telephone, women network on it. Through the telephone, women share their stories, information and emotions, demolish isolation and build the connections that lead to warm human affections. However, most existing scholarly research about women and the telephone were misleading as the activity of women talking on the phone is reported as ‘non-work’ activities or ‘just a leisure’ activity.

It is not entirely incorrect to observe women’s activity of talking on the telephone as ‘just a leisure’ activity as women’s interests in leisure are mostly chatting with their friends or family in their spare time (Spender 1995, p.191), though we cannot overlook the fact that talking on the phone is not a time-wasting activity nor is it just entertainment. According to Spender (1995), women use the telephone to communicate with their contacts merely because women love talking on the telephone. For this reason, more research is required to ascertain why ‘just a leisure’ activity description is ascribed to women so easily.

Samdahl (1992) states that leisure allows women to escape from their “socially learned role of expectations of gender” and at the same time it provides “an area for expressions of self which move beyond these expectations” (cited in Wearing 1998, p.46). This means that leisure relieves women from their “socially learned role of expectations of gender”, that is, the traditional roles of mother and a wife. Women’s traditional roles limited their freedom to enjoy leisure. For this reason, the telephone becomes a medium which allows women to have leisure as they maintain “women’s responsibility for home and children” (Rakow 1986, cited in Rakow & Navarro 1993, p.146). In other words, women are able to have their private time such as talking on the phone with others and attend to their home duties concurrently.
It appears that women’s most accessible technology has been related to mobile media. Mobile media has ushered in a variety of users that may not have had access to computers. As Frissen (1992, p.44) explains, “the boundaries between work and leisure are not clearly defined” for women. For this reason, it might not be easy to get involved with doing computing at home for women which may explain as to why women have been considered as a technologically incompetent group. Consequently, the inadequacy of “technical competence” (Na 2001, p.301) of women has lead to their exclusion as targets of new technology. It has been more than one hundred years since the first telephone was invented in the 1870s by Elishar Gray and Alexander Graham Bell. Since this development, newer types of telephones (mobile phones and smartphones) have developed. Various communication tools from landlines to smartphones are now used widely in the world, regardless of gender and age. Nevertheless, women—especially middle-aged women—remain an excluded target group in communication and new technology research.
Chapter Two

Women in Korea

Traditional mother and housewife: before the International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout

Women in Korea are subject to the vicissitudes of history. Ideologies surrounding notions of Korean women have gone through various transformations in accordance with general social and cultural shifts in society. Traditionally, Korea was a severely patriarchal society (Park 2001; Yi Kim 2001). After the Korean War in 1953, Korea achieved remarkable economic growth in manufacturing. The majority of middle-aged male workers lead this successful growth at that time (Cho Han 2000). These middle-aged male workers were the leading role of Korean’s economic growth especially during 1970s to 1980s. Back then, traditional gender roles saw a man as a breadwinner and a woman as a housewife. For this reason, it was common to be a full-time housewife after marriage for a woman in Korea. They retired from their work lives and entered into their housewife lives after getting married.

In addition, extending the paternal lineage through having children is the most important thing for married women in Korea. The identities of women were recognised through their children in this patriarchal society (Yoon 1996; Yi Kim 2001). Therefore, being a “wise mother and good wife” (Choi 2009, p.1) is the dream image for married women in Korea. Gender roles in the family were clearly set, “men’s roles as breadwinners and women’s as housekeepers” (Na 2001, p.303). For example, housekeeping, rearing children and assisting a husband are entirely women’s roles, whereas earning money from work for family is an immense responsibility for men.
Therefore, men work hard to support their family because they are the sole breadwinners in the family. According to a report in 2001, men in Korea worked the longest hours in the world (The New York Times 2001, cited in Kim 2006, p.137). They work 55.1 hours per week and this means they work more than 11 hours on working days. Though they work the longest hours in the world, they have to keep working harder and longer to support their families. The life of a workaholic makes them undomesticated. For example, they hardly have any chance to have a meal with their family after work because they finish very late at night. In addition, most of them work during the weekend, so they cannot spend time with their families. Hence, the average family in Korea is a “father-absent, mother-involved family” (Kim 2006, p.137). As a result, the role of the mother is increasingly significant for the children, while at the same time, mothers make sacrifices for their children, especially by giving their full support to the children’s education.

There is a phenomenon called the “swish of a skirt” which was prevalent in Korea during the 1990s (Na 2001, p.303; Park 2007, p.189). The “swish of a skirt” means that mothers are getting overly involved in the schooling of their children. Their expenditure for private education is excessive. In addition, some mothers move into areas concentrated with private educational institutions. This “education fever” (Park 2007, p.189) of Korean mothers is criticised by several Korean feminists including Ok Hee Im. Im (2001) discusses the “hysteria of children’s education” on the part of mothers in Korea. For example, the daily routine of mothers revolves around their children’s schedule of private education institutions. Mothers bring their children to the doorstep of private education institutions and they wait for their children at the cafés nearby. These private education institutions differ from schools and they have after school lessons. They provide extra classes for students who need more specified learning courses in order to get better grades. The courses are mainly focused on mathematics and English. Also they are usually expensive. One of the popular streets is located in Seoul, Gang Nam Gu, Dae Chi Dong. The cafés on that street are
packed with mothers from everywhere in Seoul, waiting every weekday night for their children. In the cafés, mothers share information about their children’s education even though they don’t know each other. Mothers can talk about their children’s education with one thing in common—they are mothers who are obsessed with their children’s education.

These mothers take care of husbands and children within and outside of the home. They are playing both roles as “professional mother” (Kim 2006, p.137) and “professional housewives” (Yoon 2001, p.82) who do nursing, nurturing, attending and educating their children both materially and morally. Korean mothers are devoted to their children, however they are not tolerant about spending time on themselves. They believe that raising their children well is their fate and their duty and what their mothers also did for them. However, along with the emergence of feminism in the early 1990s in Korea, which proliferated during the IMF bailout in 1997, Korean society has started to change its old-fashioned ideas about women’s role in society. Women in Korea have also started to change the traditional roles of mothers who are devoted to their children unconditionally.

Missy Syndrome

Since the IMF bailout in 1997, political views about women have changed favourably. Kim Dae-Jung's administration enacted some female-friendly policies which could be viewed as a turning point for feminism in Korea during 1997. Alongside these policies, this economic crisis lead to the “reversal of traditional gender roles and endangered the stability of the patriarchal nuclear family system” (Kim 2008, p.392). Due to the worsening economic conditions, women had to come out of the house to work rather than being good mothers and wives at home. The reason why women in Korea started working was not only for their own family’s domestic economy but it was also
perceived as strengthening the nation’s economy. The ultimate reason for being working mums is to save the whole nation. They believe that the improvement of each family’s economic condition can be a cornerstone of Korea’s economic growth. During the IMF period people in Korea rallied round to attain the dream of “becoming a powerful nation” (Cho Han 2000, p.62). To build a powerful nation, they started various campaigns to achieve national unity. Gold collection, which took place from 1997 to 1998, is one of the representative examples of campaigns during the IMF period.

The gold collection campaign was diffused to the whole nation regardless of age and gender. In particular, many housewives gave up their wedding rings and their children’s first-birthday rings to support the nation’s economy. Both wedding rings and first birthday rings mean a lot to Koreans. For instance, first birthday rings are given to children because parents pray for their children’s health and wealth. Nonetheless, people in Korea donated their gold to the government with no strings attached during 1997 to 1998. The only reason to donate their gold was for saving their country and “becoming a powerful nation”. This movement can be explained with Korean collectivism. According to Shim, Kim and Martin,

*Uri*, or we-ness... in-group-ness is a more essentially relevant feature of Korean collectivism. The social relationship among Korean in-groups are based on social networks, the sophisticated genealogical system, the power of school connections, or regionalism (2008, p.71).

As Korean characteristic collectivism—“*Uri*”, “we-ness” or “in-group-ness”— a movement like the gold collection could only be successful in Korea. In addition to “becoming a powerful nation”, people had to “save the family!” (Cho Han 2000, p.62) above all. For this reason, the media instigated campaigns of “save the head of the family”, “encourage men” and “support and cheer up
our fathers” (p.62). At that time, many breadwinners (fathers) lost their jobs and got a reduction of salary. They could not properly fulfill the role of fathers and husbands in their family. In May 1998, more than 80% of households in Korea greatly suffered because of this reduction of income (The Korea Herald 1998, p.32, cited in Kim & Finch 2002, p.43). Therefore, mass media encouraged people to recognise the importance of fathers in the family. In 1998 there was a 42% (total 8,622 people) increase in the suicide rate compared to the previous year (total 6,068 people). Males had a higher percentage than females in the report of Cause of Death Statistics in 1998 (KOSIS: Korea Statistical Information Service 1998). It could be assumed that the reason why males had a higher percentage rate of suicide than females in 1998 is because fathers couldn’t do their duties to their families because of unemployment and crippling debts. Concurrently, women started to going into the workplace to help support their husbands and family. In a way, this economic crisis brings not only “a challenge” but also “an opportunity” for women (Kim 2008, p.395).

Due to the absence of the head of house’s role (i.e. unemployed fathers) in the family, women had to take the duty of both fathers and mothers. Although most of the jobs are low-paid and part time jobs such as a sales in a department store or supermarket, housekeepers and insurance sales, more and more women started working. As a 1997 survey indicates, 51.1% of married women in Korea worked outside of the home (Joong Ang Daily News 1998, cited in Kim & Finch 2002, p.44). In particular, the jobs that women take are slightly controversial because most of these jobs are low-paid and temporary position service jobs. However, this challenge gave opportunities to women to take a step forward outside of the home.

The gradual increase of women entering the workforce and their high-level of education has advanced women’s economic ability more than men’s. These changes in women’s social status in Korea created a new wave of feminist studies in Korea (Kim 2008). This means the study of feminism became a part of “popular culture” (Kim 2008, p.394) and this trend led people to
consider women as more “liberal and independent identity” (p.394) in Korea. With this female-friendly social atmosphere, women started forming feminist groups and movements for gender equality (Cho Han 2002, p.20). An example is the “Missy” phenomenon—this neologism was coined and became popularised in Korea in late 1993 (Kim 2008, p.394). A “Missy” is a young married woman who has a different lifestyle and philosophy compared to previous conservative married women (Cho Han 2000; Cho Han 2002; Kim 2008; Park 2007; Yoon 2001). Missy women have the self-confidence to argue for gender equality—such as the domestic division of labour—with their husbands. Moreover, they do not only take care of their children and husband, but also develop interesting lives for themselves.

In other words, the fallout from the IMF bailout in 1997 can be seen to contribute to the changed social atmosphere regarding women in Korea. As Kim (2008, p.395) explains, more women have become independent because of “economic power” and they are more confident to “express their thoughts and desires”. Thus, the traditional Korean gender role of “women as homemakers” (Kim 2008, p.395) has been radically altered with women becoming super women who do work both inside and outside the home. Simultaneously, women do not consider themselves as simply “a stay-at-home mother” anymore, rather they are more conscious of the financial affairs of their home (Kim & Finch 2002, p.46).

**Ajumma in Korea**

*Ajumma* is a Korean term that simply means a middle-aged and married woman. It is an everyday word for most Koreans on many occasions. However, the meaning of *ajumma* cannot be defined in a word and it is difficult to translate (Cho Han 2002). Rather, the meaning of the term *ajumma* should be understood in company with Korean cultural and social context. Besides, the word
*ajumma* can be used not only for close relationships such as family or friends, but also for strangers on the street. For example, in a restaurant, people call a serving woman an *ajumma*. In addition, to call to a stranger on the street, especially a woman, you can call her “*ajumma*”.

In this situation, the meaning of *ajumma* is similar to ‘excuse me’ in English. However, an *ajumma* can be used only when calling out to women not men. Besides, the term *ajumma* is mostly used for calling women who look like an *ajumma*. It is complex and subtle to call a woman an *ajumma* because there are no exact rules or definitions about *ajumma*-looking women. A woman who looks like an *ajumma* could be defined by subjective perspective. However, the term *ajumma* has been used among Koreans culturally and traditionally for a long period of time. In other words, people in Korea know how to use the word *ajumma* despite there being no precise definition.

While an exact origin of the word *ajumma* remains unknown, there are some historical factors that inform the development of the word. According to the National Institute of The Korean Language, the word *ajumma* actually comes from the downgraded word *a-ju-meo-nee*. The origin of the word *a-ju-meo-nee* was *a-ja-ma* in the sixteenth century. The meaning of *a-ja-ma* is ‘aunt’ in English and used among family members and relatives in the past. In other words, it had been used as a kinship term. However, the word form and the literal sense of the word changed some time around the eighteenth century. This means that the word *a-ja-ma* was replaced by *ajumma*. Moreover, *ajumma* is not a kinship term any more but forms part of the vocabulary of everyday language.

The examples above show that the word *ajumma* is used in various situations and it is a word that is commonly used in Korea. Though it is an everyday word, *ajumma* is an unwelcome word for most women in Korea. Even though it is a term for middle-aged and married women generally, calling someone *ajumma* is not desirable for women in Korea. One of the reasons for this could be explained by the media’s impact on Korean society. Several established media including
TV dramas, TV commercials and even blog posts address the negative aspects of *ajumma*. The media therefore enforces negative connotations of *ajumma*. For this reason, being an *ajumma* or being called an *ajumma* in Korea is an unwelcome or unwished for thing. Due to the unwelcome attention through the media, it is unflattering to be called an *ajumma*, not only for middle-aged and married women, but also younger and non-married women. However, *ajummas* have evolved continuously with Korean history as a representative group of middle-aged and married women even though the pervading unwelcome images of *ajumma* among general public in Korea.

There is little research about the *ajumma* even in Korea. Housewives in Korea (i.e. *ajumma*) are described as just “homemakers, wives and mothers” who take the privileged position as women and human beings within Korean society (Rowan & Park 2010, p.356). The nation’s economy, education, and socialisation in Korea have shaped, and been shaped by *ajummas*. After the Korean War, during the 1960s and 1970s, large numbers of female factory workers in Korea made a significant contribution to export-led industrialisation and to the “economic miracle” (Kim 2003, p 78).

In 1980s and 1990s, *ajummas* concentrated on household affairs caring for their children and husbands as mothers and wives. They were concerned to support their husbands and to educate their children. For that reason, Korea topped the list regarding expenses on education (Oliver & Kang 2010, cited in Rowan & Park 2010, p.355) and created a unique phenomenon like the “swish of a skirt”, as mentioned above. During the IMF bailout in 1997, *ajummas* entered the workforce to support the nation’s economy and their families. Consequently, *ajummas* became super women who worked both inside and outside the home. From that time, they have evolved to become more independent and liberal to express their thoughts to their families and society.

Even though an *ajumma* has multiple roles and titles such as mother, wife or sometimes worker, we should not overlook the most important but obvious matter that an *ajumma* is a woman.
At home, she assists her husband as a wife, at the same time, she sacrifices her life for her children as a mother. Outside home, she is called *ajumma* instead of her real name. As an *ajumma*, she takes care of her husband and children first rather than enjoying her life as a woman.

According to population statistics Ministry of the Interior (2015), Korea’s current population is just over 51 million (51,482,816 in September, 2015). Among the total population, women make up half at 25,744,802 and women aged 40-69 are 11 million (11,032,532). This equates to approximately 21% of the total population and nearly 42% of the entire women’s population in Korea. In other words, four out of ten women are *ajummas* in Korea. In times past, *ajummas* appeared to be a minor group because the patriarchal family system was prevalent in Korean society. Besides, *ajummas* are still unnoticed and people are biased against them even in Korea. However, *ajummas* are rather a unique group of middle-aged and married women who ought to be examined conscientiously.

Being an *ajumma* in Korea is not easy. As mentioned above, the image and social recognition of *ajumma* is not affirmative through society at large in Korea. The lack of understanding about the *ajumma* is mostly associated with negatives. The meaning of *ajumma* is informally defined as a woman who is aged over mid-30s, a married housewife with children. However, the word *ajumma* embraces diverse social stratum and extensive age ranges from 20 to 50 or 60. Besides, both a housewife or a working woman can be an *ajumma* in reality. In general, the common elements of an *ajumma* such as certain age range (mid-30s to late-60s), married and having children are used to determine whether a woman is or is not an *ajumma*. Furthermore, being an *ajumma* or being recognised as an *ajumma* is also about having visually *ajummarous* looks.

In most cases, *ajummarous* women are judged by their appearance (*ajumma* hair style, fashion style, makeup style), their behaviour (way of talking, loud voice, sitting with their legs apart in the subway) and their thinking (conservative views about life and marriage). With one of these
*ajummarous* elements, any women can be called or recognised as an *ajumma* even though they are not in the category of *ajumma* that is generally described. Thus, these *ajummarous* elements are prevalent but stereotypical and disdainful. The perspective that judges *ajummas* by their characteristic appearances can cause a slanted and biased view.

The gender of *ajummas* is often joked about. In a popular Korean joke, there are three different genders—men, women and *ajumma*. *Ajumma* is categorised as the third gender—neither male nor female. Analogically, we can assume that the general awareness of Korean society about the collectiveness of *ajummas’* existence and the distinct characteristics of *ajummas* are not very positive. In other words, the *ajumma* are not recognised as women but rather just as *ajummas*. Then, is the concept of the *ajumma* situated only in Korea? In Western society there is a word for married women which is Mrs. However, Mrs is used with a woman’s husband’s last name and this is an important gendered distinction that surely deserves additional commentary. In the West, some women use “Ms” as a feminist status that doesn’t denote whether they are married or single. However, in the West the concept of the *ajumma* does not exist. *Ajumma* is not simply a term for a group of middle-aged and married women, rather it connotes a complex and various set of elements found in Korean society.

There is a widespread negative connotation about an *ajumma* in Korean society (Choi, Kim & Kim 1999, p.57). It is not enough to simply lump all *ajummas* together as a displeased and stagnant group of middle-aged women. We need to understand the category as diverse and heterogeneous. Moreover, we must move beyond the stereotypes that say more about Korean gendered inequality than the actual group of *ajummas*. 
(1) Types of Ajumma

**Mi-Je (Made in the USA) Ajumma**

When *Mi-Je ajumma* came to town, the town became lively and cheerful. *Mi-Je* means “Made in the USA” in Korean. These “Made in the USA” *ajumma* carried a big bag like *Amore ajumma* (cosmetic *ajumma*) and they sold a great assortment of groceries, household items and even home electronics. Of course those products were all made in the USA and they were from PX (post exchange) with the US armed forces in Korea. *Mi-Je ajummas* took an active part in door-to-door sales in Korea during 1960s to early 1980s (Kim 2010).

After the Korean War in 1953, the quality of products made in Korea was still inferior. At the same time, industrialisation created the middle class and they wanted to buy better quality products. In addition, America was the symbol of freedom, wealth and prosperity to people in Korea at that time (Kim 2001). For these reasons, products made in USA were popular among middle class Korean people so *Mi-Je ajumma* could exist as an important supplier of those American products which symbolised freedom, wealth and prosperity during the 1960s to early 1980s in Korea. However, *Mi-Je ajumma* started disappearing when the liberalisation of imports was put into effect in 1983 (Kim 2010). In addition, the quality of products made in Korea improved constantly so that by the 1990s they were comparable to products made in the USA.

Now, there is no more *Mi-Je ajumma* in Korea. However, the one thing we need to remember that is, they lived tough through their difficult life, raising children and supporting husbands by carrying big bags to this door and that door to sell products from the USA. They did this to make a living for their families. Furthermore, those *ajumma* sellers contributed to enrich various gatherings among *ajumma* customers as well. Through regular gatherings with *Mi-Je ajummas* and *Amore ajummas* (cosmetic *ajummas*), *ajummas* who were customers in town could
meet each other and share various stories from useful information to miscellaneous gossip. In other words, Mi-Je ajummas and Amore ajummas (cosmetic ajummas) were a bridge or a mediator to link ajummas to each other.

**Amore Ajumma**

Like Mi-Je ajumma there was cosmetic ajumma. The cosmetic ajumma was a door-to-door saleswomen of cosmetic products during 1960s to 1980s. The reason why these cosmetic ajumma were called Amore ajumma is because Amore was one of the largest cosmetic brands in Korea at that time. There were several cosmetic brands such as Amore and they are precursors of door-to-door sales of cosmetics in Korea around 1960s (Park 2005). They visited houses to sell cosmetic products to ajummas. Ajummas got together at a house to hear about the latest cosmetic products from Amore ajumma.

Figure 1. *Amore ajumma’s door-to-door sales in the 1960s*
Amore ajumma were more than just door-to-door saleswomen of cosmetic products. Rather, Amore ajumma were considered mobile messengers who spread the news from ajummas to ajummas, from door to door. They did not only sell cosmetic products, but also hosted regular meetings for ajummas. This means that, Amore ajummas were mediators who helped foster connections between ajummas through the door-to-door sales of cosmetics. The reason why they could become closer is there is common ground between Amore ajumma and ajummas in town. Through Amore ajumma, ajummas are able to bring up and share their stories from mundane to sometimes very personal stories.

The primary reason for cosmetic ajummas to visit houses was to sell and promote cosmetic products to ajummas. Given the principal customer were ajummas, the cosmetic ajumma bundled cosmetic products with services such as face massages. For this reason, ajumma customers visited the house spontaneously to get free face massages and meet other ajummas. The services encouraged ajumma customers to purchase cosmetic products. At the same time, regular meetings meant women were able to consolidate their relationships with each other. This phenomenon from the 1960s to the 1980s is comparatively similar to online or mobile ajumma communities these days. Although the method of communication and location of the place where ajummas communicate today are different to the cosmetic ajumma era they hold one thing in common: the opportunity for interpersonal gathering and communication.

Photography exhibition, Ajumma by Hyung-geun Oh

“When this photo exhibition was held in 1999, the word ‘Ajumma’ had totally a different feeling compared to the word ‘Ajumma’ now. It contained more negative meanings at that time. I really
wanted to change that. I rather put up ‘Ajummas’ in front to change their negative images that people commonly think to bring positive effects” (Oh 2014, cited in Kwon 2014).

Figure 2. Ajumma photographed by Hyung-geun Oh (1999)

Hyung-geun Oh, a Korean documentary photographer, held an exhibition called Ajumma in 1999, Seoul. He photographed portraits of ajummas from the whole of Korea for two years. Most of the portraits of show women with typical ajummas features, for example, permed short or middle length of hair and wearing flimsy-glittery accessories. However, inside each portrait of the ajummas, they look somewhat forlorn. According to Hyung-geun Oh (2012, cited in Kim 2012), he tried to catch the emotional insecurity of ajummas living as a strong mother, a wife and a woman. From the portraits, ajummas have all different outlooks and they are from various backgrounds and stories.

However, they are connected as one thing, an ajumma. At home, they are expected to be a strong and supportive mother to their children and a wife to their husband. On the one hand, they are considered and recognised as flabby middle-aged and married ajummas even though they are super women who take care of their families and work to enhance the economic growth of the
nation. For this reason, *ajummas* have no place to realise themselves in their entirety. Thus, the photographs presented the two sides of the *ajumma’s* life: a woman of authority at home and another intimidated *ajumma* of the *ajummas* group outside home. However, time passed and *ajummas* have been changed. They have started living for themselves. This means that the revolt of the *ajummas* has started. For example, younger aged *ajummas* are forming a new *ajumma* group, *mum*.

(2) *Mum* vs *Ajumma*

*Mum*

At a Kid’s cafe in Seoul, a mum’s meeting is in full swing. They put their name tags on their chest and one of mums is now introducing herself to other mums. “Hello I’m Ji-woo *Mum* and living in Gang nam gu, Seoul. I’m a working mum so hope to share any good advice from you today.”

A woman in her mid thirties introduces herself as Ji-woo *Mum*. Ji-woo is not her name, it is her daughter’s name. According to the *Collins English Dictionary*, the definition of a mum is an informal word for a mother and its origin is from American English of mommy or mamma in 1867 (*Collins English Dictionary* 2014). It is an English word but it is now used broadly and commonly in Korea among married women who have children. At this point, the differences between an *ajumma* and a mum. Both of them are known as middle-aged and married women and who may have children. In this regard, an *ajumma* and a mum must be considered carefully. However, each of them is distinguished differently in some ways. Mum is a newly used term that represents a group of married women who have children and the age range of their children is usually from infants to the lower grades of elementary school, which is from age 0 to approximately 10. Similar to the case of the word of *ajumma*, there is no exact academic definition for the word mum in Korea at the
present time. However, ‘mums’ should be differentiated from *ajummas* and this chapter will aim to define who ‘mums’ are.

In a general but unofficial way, married women are categorised as a group of *ajumma* in Korea. However, *ajumma* and mum need to be considered as different groups even though both are groups of married women. The group of mums is called ‘*Mum Jok*’ in Korean. *Mum* means a mother as mentioned above and *Jok* indicates tribe or a group of people in Korean so it means the tribe of mums in English. There are various *Joks* in Korea, for example, ‘*Chalna Jok*’ refers to instant tribe who use mobile phones as a part of their daily life such as reading mobile news, mobile shopping and surfing nearby famous restaurants (Lee 2010). In addition, ‘*Touch Jok*’ change the shopping paradigm through doing mobile shopping with their smartphones (Min 2013).

These days most people in Korea adopt smartphones in their everyday lives, especially ‘*Touch Jok*’ who represent the tribe of mobile shopping through the usage of the smartphones (Kim 2014). Smartphones allow ‘*Touch Jok*’ to do mobile shopping without constraints of time and space. They can do mobile shopping while commuting on public transport or in bed before they sleep. Besides, smartphone-friendly environments of mobile shopping websites and apps for smartphones enhance the mobile shopping experience. Thus, various ‘*Joks*’ are created and disappear according to the appearance of new life styles in Korean society.

‘*Mum Jok*’ was also created and formed as a new type of *ajumma* group, which it can be said is a young version of *ajumma*. Most of them have one or more children and these *Mum Jok* range in age mid-twenty to mid-forty. Again, the term ‘*Mum Jok*’ and their age range are not defined by law and regulations. Furthermore there is not enough academic research data about them yet. However, their age range could be defined as mid-twenty to mid-forty by analogical interpretation through searching blogs and other online communities for ‘*Mum Jok*’. The ‘*Mum Jok*’ is also subdivided
into a variety of classification according to interests, purposes, regions, ages and schools of their children, and even a woman’s postpartum care centre.

The example of the postpartum care centre is interesting as an example of how ‘Mum Jok’ in Korea form personal connections and keep and extend the network of ‘Mum Jok’. The meeting usually consists of mums who stay in the same postpartum care centre during the same period. For this reason, their children’s birthdays are mostly in the same month, same season and even on the same day. While they’re staying together, mums are able to share feelings and undergo trials and errors after childbirth in the same place. Hence, they believe that there is an act of providence that makes connection between each other and even their children. They feel like they’re in the same boat as a mum with a newborn baby so they can be attached to each other. In other words, those mums and babies have ‘Jeong’ to each other.

**Jeong**

To define jeong in one sentence is not easy. It is “an ambiguous and amorphous concept. However it would be meaningful and invaluable as a psychiatrist to study how this concept came to take root as one of the most significant facets in the emotions and thoughts of Korean people and how it influenced social consciousness” (Chung & Cho 2006, p.47). In other words, jeong cannot be defined and explained briefly but one important thing to consider is that it has an inseparable relation to Korean people and society. Jeong is defined as similar to love but it is also distinguished from love.

According to Luke Kim (1996, p.16), jeong represents “a more primordial and primitive way of relating than love” and compared with love in Western culture, “jeong is similar but more embracing and qualitatively different in concept than the Western sense of love”. Thus, it could be
possible that those mums who met in the postpartum care centre build and maintain the relationship because they have *jeong* to each other. Namely, *jeong* can possibly be considered as a link between mums. Consequently, *jeong* can be understood easier with the concept of *haan* and *woori* (we-ness).

**Haan**

The opposite of *jeong* is *haan*. According to Luke Kim,

> anger is likely to transform into *haan* feelings over time when one could not express anger and rage outwardly, and when one could not act out, revenge, forget, push away, get over with, resolve, dissolve or unknot the anger, especially in the old days when they did not have many options. Koreans so readily understand and deeply experience *haan* that it is a folk term used by common people (1996, p.17).

After Korea achieved independence from Japan in 1945 after 35 years of colonisation, the Korean War broke out in 1950. The war ended tragically because Korea was divided into two Koreas, South Korea and North Korea, and many families were torn apart by the Korean War. Even though they experienced this tragic and historic upheaval, Koreans had to “swallow and suppress their feelings” because they had to continue living no matter how hard their lives were (Kim 1996, p.18). One notion of *haan* is that it is suffering and it is a collective suffering among Koreans.

*Haan* is not experienced or learned, rather Koreans are already born with *haan*. As a well-known Korean poet, Ko-Un, described *haan*, “Koreans are born from the womb of *haan*, grew up in the bosom of *haan*, and live out *haan*, die leaving *haan* behind” (cited in Kim 1996, p.18). The concepts of *haan* and *jeong* seem like opposites, however the two are closely correlated with each
other. The Koreans are quite an homogeneous group, speaking only one language, even though Korea is now becoming a more multicultural society.

Nowadays Korean society is becoming more multicultural, though historically the country is homogenous, speaking one language. The concepts of jeong and haan are deeply ingrained in Korean society and cannot be easily explained to non-Koreans. As a single ethnic group, Koreans share blood ties and it is the ties of ethnicity and collective and historical experience that allow Korean people to share jeong and haan with each other. In other words haan and jeong give Koreans to become woori (we-ness).

**Woori**

Woori means ‘we-ness’ in Korean. ‘We’ is of course a plural of ‘I’, so the word woori can be interpreted as a group of ‘I’. However, ‘we’ is not simply a plural of ‘I’ for Koreans so the meaning of ‘we’ in English and woori in Korean is different. Woori is not solely a plural word for ‘I’, rather it is consist of ‘I’ and jeong. In other words, the woori (we-ness) is “I + jeong + I + jeong + I… = woori” (Chung & Cho 2006, p.49).

In general, Koreans use woori instead of ‘I’ even though they speak in the first-person. For example, the sentence “woori wife (our wife) has two sisters” actually means “my wife has two sisters” in Korean. Besides, woori means not just a plural of ‘I’, rather it should be understood and interpreted as woori (we-ness) in Korea. Moreover, woori (we-ness) is unavoidably based on jeong. According to Kim (1994), “Jeong is more than kindness or liking another. Jeong brings about the ‘special’ feelings in relationships: togetherness, sharing, bonding. Jeong is what makes us say ‘we’ rather than ‘I’, ‘ours’ rather than ‘mine’” (cited in Kim, Kim & Kelly 2006, p.152). Thus, the sense
of belonging for Koreans is the essence of *woori* (we-ness). Indeed, this sense of belonging can be explained as Korean Collectivism. The Korean collective culture is pervasive across the society.

The “relatedness and belonging” (Chung & Cho 2006, p.50) of *woori*, and the spread of *jeong* in society, extends the boundaries of human relations in Korea. For this reason, people are able to make more personal connections and sometimes form cliques. They create groups and sub-groups within sub-groups continuously and enrich their personal connections by belonging to various groups. Those sub-groups are mostly categorised by blood, schools and home towns. In such groups, people protect and support each other like family even though they not related. According to Hofstede, “People from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive ingroups, which throughout people’s lifetimes continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty” (1991, p.51). Thus, people are related to each other with *jeong* and they become *woori* through belonging to *jeong*-based groups.

For this reason, a mum’s group from a postpartum care centre can be formed and is continued because of those Korean traits mentioned above. Even though they are from outside the immediate family circle or friends, those mums and even their infants become *woori* to each other and have a sense of belonging to the *jeong*-based same group. There are a variety of numbers and types of groups in Korea. In particular, the formation of diverse types of groups among mums and *ajummas* are increasing constantly these days. This means that both mums and *ajummas* now have more opportunities to participate in various types of meetings to develop their relationships through broadening networks.

Furthermore, subdivided meetings and groups are formed continuously. Most of these subdivided meetings are both online and offline with no division. For example, if mums have a regular offline meeting once a month at a specified place such as a cafe, they don’t end with this regular offline meeting at a cafe. In other words, they actually keep meeting constantly before and
after a regular meeting at a cafe through online spaces for instance, blogs, Instagram and Kakao Talk. Though they don’t have an actual meeting face-to-face, mums are able to communicate with each other interactively and instantaneously through mobile social media on smartphones.

These days, ‘Mum Jok’ have more opportunity to communicate with other mums due to the spread of smartphones. Through using smartphones with diversified apps that are specially designed for mums they have easier and faster ways of mobile communication. In particular, mums who use smartphones and apply multifarious apps to parenting their children are called ‘Smart Mum’ (Jeon 2012; Kim 2012; Woo 2013).  

**Smart Mum**

‘Smart Mum’ is a newly coined word for ‘Mum Jok’ to describe mums who are familiar with the usage of smartphones in their everyday lives (Jeon 2012; Kim 2012; Woo 2013). Principally, a smart mum makes the best use of apps related to rearing children. They suit the web to find useful information and share valuable tips related to their children. In particular, they spend the time online shopping for a variety of baby goods. In other words, they devote a great deal of time on price comparison sites to find reasonably-priced products regardless of domestic and foreign websites. Besides, they do Internet collaborative consumption with other mums as well. For example, if there is a popular baby item among mums, one of those mums will put an advertisement to recruit purchasers on her blog or SNS. The more purchasers are gathered, the better group rate from the company. This is a win-win situation for both product company and mum-purchasers who want to buy the items with lower price than market prices. For this reason, Internet collaborative consumption among mums through the use of smartphones and PC has been increasing in popularity in Korea.
According to the annual report of the patterns of online shopping usage in Korea, the percentage of online shopping amongst Koreans is gradually increasing. In particular, women in their 30s are the leaders of the fast-growing mobile shopping market in Korea in 2014. Analysis of the mobile shopping consumer by age and gender by the three leading mobile shopping market in Korea Coupang (http://www.coupang.com), Tmon (http://www.ticketmonster.co.kr) and Gmarket (http://www.gmarket.co.kr) shows that the women’s market especially in their 30s is the strongest among other age groups of female consumers. In the case of Tmon, the female market share of mobile sales in 2014 reached approximately 70% and 46% of total female consumers were in their 30s. One of the biggest mobile shopping markets in Korea, Coupang, reported that the items of largest expenditure among female consumers in their 30s were baby goods (39%) in 2014 (Shin & Kim 2015).

Besides, mobile shopping has risen among people in accordance with the spread of smart digital devices such as smartphones and tablet PCs. The market of mobile shopping is not as big as the online shopping market yet. However, mobile shopping is capable of sustaining growth as the number of smartphone users is increasing constantly. According to the annual report ‘Survey on Internet Usage in Korea in 2014’ by ISIS (Internet Statistics Information System) of KISA (Korea Internet & Security Agency), the rate of PC use for online shopping declined 4.8% in 2014 compared with in 2013. By contrast, the rate of mobile shopping through smartphone usage increased 2.5 times from 43.2% to 58.6% in 2014, compared to 2012 (ISIS of KISA 2014).

The main reason why mobile shopping is growing continuously is because of its convenience. Firstly, it is easy to connect to wireless Internet through mobile devices, for example smartphones. Second, there are no constraints on time and space when doing mobile shopping. In other words, people can go mobile shopping at anytime and anywhere with only their smartphone. Thirdly, shoppers don’t have to hesitate to find a suitable shopping mall as there are various apps
that help them to find the right one. The apps for mobile shopping allow people to shop easily, quickly and even inexpensively. Those apps find the shopping mall and even suggest the lowest prices on behalf of people who do not want to waste their time searching. Mobile shopping liberates people who are too busy to actually go shopping and who are sitting in front of a PC. For this reason, mobile shopping allows people to have the opportunity of time-space free shopping.

**Um Ji Mum**

‘Mum Jok’ is one of the beneficiaries of those people who are able to do mobile shopping regardless of time and space. The advent of mobile shopping leads mums, especially who have infants, to be capable of enjoying shopping through their smartphones. Thanks to mobile shopping, they can do two things at once: baby care and shopping for family, babies and themselves. ‘Um Ji Mum’ is a newly-coined word made up of ‘Um Ji Jok’ and ‘Mum’ (Kim 2014; Lee 2014; Han 2014). The meaning of ‘Um Ji Jok’ is thumb tribes in Korean and it represents the mobile shopper.

Hence, the ‘Um Ji Mum’ (thumb mum) refers to mums who enjoy mobile shopping through using smartphones in Korea. They are one of the mum groups that are proficient in mobile devices, therefore their accessibility to mobile shopping is high. Consequently, they are unconstrained in sharing information about the products in online communities and SNS because of their Internet friendly character. Mobile shopping allows them to save time instead of going to the supermarket with their infants or accessing supermarket websites on a PC. ‘Um Ji Mums’ do more convenient ways of shopping by moving their ‘Um Ji’ (thumb) on the mobile devices.

It is true that the number of mobile shoppers is increasing gradually in Korea. According to Homeplus (http://www.homeplus.co.kr), one of major supermarket chains in Korea, the proportion of customers who access to the online Homeplus with their smartphones has reached 55.2 percent in
September, 2014 (Song 2014). Moreover, the number of mobile customers of Homeplus is growing constantly and they overtook the number of PC customers of Homeplus in one year in 2014. The example of Homeplus shows that the shopping patterns of people who shop online have changed from PC to mobile devices such as smartphones. Thus, it can be assumed that the traditional way of shopping is changing quickly through the new life style of mobile shopping practice. This new life style of mobile shopping practice is well presented in the case of ‘Um Ji Mum’.

They are one of the represented groups of mum who shop online markets such as Homeplus with their smartphones. Due to the convenience of mobile shopping, more mums are becoming ‘Um Ji Mum’ who enjoy mobile shopping without being restricted by time and space. At the same time, several online markets like Homeplus have launched marketing especially targeting ‘Um Ji Mum’. Simultaneously, special marketing of online market enhances the growth of the number of ‘Um Ji Mum’ in Korea. For instance, the mobile shopping sales of baby goods of Homeplus have been up greatly from 14.1% in January, 2014 to 21.2% in September, 2014 (Song 2014).

**Mums in the Kids Cafe**

*Mum Jok* share useful information with other mums for their children. They communicate and make relationships with other mums in online spaces such as blogs and SNS. Indeed, the number of online cafes for mums in Korea’s biggest portal sites such as Daum ([www.daum.net](http://www.daum.net)) and Naver ([www.naver.com](http://www.naver.com)) is increasing continuously. Besides, those mums use SNS such as Kakao Story to be connected with other mums through sharing photos or useful information and making comments about those photos or information. Their communication in online spaces through their smartphones or computers is vigorous.
However, their communicative spaces are not limited to online spaces, rather those moms extend their relationships with other mums to offline spaces as well. Kids cafe is a good example to explain how mums enrich their relationships in offline spaces. As the name suggests, kids cafe is a cafe for kids. Even though its name is kids cafe, the space is designed for kids as well as their mums. In 2014, there were 434 kids cafes in Korea according to a media release from the Ministry of Food and Drug Safety Korea in June, 2014 (MFDS 2014). The number of cafes for children are increasing constantly across the country. A child’s cafe looks like a cafe people commonly know but has a difference: it has playing facilities and a specially designed meal or beverage menu for kids. Namely, it is a space with a cafe and children’s playground.

A kids cafe is a fulfilling place for both mums and their children. For mums, they have leisure time with other mums. Kids cafes are considered as “third places” for mums after the home and the office. According to Florence Chee (2005), people who go to these “third places” have similar interests. In these “third places” mums can meet other mums without being disturbed by housework, husband and baby. They are able to have ‘mum’s time’ to communicate with other mums, at the same time it is possible to take care of their children in kids cafe. It provides food and beverage menus that cater to both mums and children.

In addition, kids cafes offer diversified educational recreations for different age groups of children. The kids cafe has been evolving continuously according to the requests of mums and their children. The food and beverage menu is improving constantly and offer health-conscious diet for both mums and children. Furthermore, the playing facilities are subjected to regular safety inspections as well. Therefore, a kids cafe is not just a cafe for kids and mums. Moreover, a kids cafe has became a sort of “third place” for both mums and children where they can enjoy ‘mum’s time’ and ‘children’s time’. This means that mums and children can enrich their own human relationships through socialising and playing with other mums and children.
In the kids cafe, mums build a relationship with other mums in various ways. In general, mums meet other mums in the kids cafe with whom they are already well acquainted. Mums sometimes make a new relationship with other mums in kids cafe as well. As there is common ground between mums in that they are all mums having similarly-aged children. They make relationships with other mums easily through sharing helpful information for themselves and their children such as parenting, mobile shopping tips and recipes for health-conscious diet for both mums and children. Mums exchange their mobile phone numbers or Kakao Talk’s ID to keep connections with each other within online spaces. Having continuous communication such as instant mobile chatting on Kakao Talk or uploading photos and making comments on them on Kakao Story or Instagram enables those mums to maintain the relationship with other mums constantly.

Even though mums do not meet everyday, they still communicate with each other through various ways of mobile communication at every moment. In other words, mums make new connections with other mums at a kids cafe and they extend those newly connected relationships on blogs or SNS through the usage of smartphones. Then, they keep developing those connections through regular meetings at a kids cafe. Thus, mums build and keep the connections with other mums to transcend the boundaries of online and offline spaces. Hence, mums have borderless and circulated communication online and offline. Kids cafes are not something which is only in Korea. Many countries have kids cafes for both kids and mums, for example, Australia, Japan and Netherlands. However the characteristic of the Korean kids cafe’s space occupancy might differ from other countries. Nevertheless, what is obvious in the case of Korean kids cafes is that they are places for mums to maintain relationships and to also make a new relationship with other mums. At the same time, it can be considered as a “third place” where mums are able to enjoy their own time with other mums.
(3) Revolt of *Ajumma*

There are the continually new diverse communities, activities and associations for *ajummas* and made by *ajummas*. The Internet enhances the spread of various communities and regular meetings for *ajummas* both online and offline. The unique characteristics of the Internet “allows a greater range of behaviours, a greater number of choices, and a certain ability for creative self-expression that is not possible in other electronic media” (Winokur 2004, p.286). This means that the environment of new media—for example, the Internet and smartphones—encourage *ajummas* to broaden their boundaries to outside of the home from inside of the home. Furthermore, it allows *ajummas* to form their own communities or activities that have an *ajumma* sentiment.

The communities or activities built by *ajummas* have their own unique sentiment even though the use of new media technology among *ajummas* is still in an inchoate stage compared with other groups of younger females or youth more generally. Below are some representative examples of various activities and communities of *ajumma* through the use of new media technology.

*Ajumma* day (31st May)

In Korea, May is regarded as family month and there are special days related to family, for instance, Children’s day (5th May), Parents’ day (8th May) and Coming-of-Age day (18th May). Since 2000, one more special day has been declared by around 50 *ajummas* on the last day of May called *Ajumma* day (31st May). It is meaningful to celebrate it on that day because May is regarded as family month in Korea. The idea of establishing *Ajumma* day in May is because *ajummas* wish to have one very special day a year which is entirely for themselves without caring about their family members. In other words, *ajummas* can discharge the responsibilities of being mothers and wives on *Ajumma* day.
To attend Ajumma day on the 31st May each year, allows the women to get a day off from their daily household affairs and their labor for their family. Ajumma day is for every ajumma regardless of their positions such as a mother, a wife, a working mum, a social being or an independent being. They unite together once a year on Ajumma day in the name of ajumma. Through various activities on Ajumma day that are planned and ran by ajummas, they get the chance to proclaim what and who ajummas are to the world. Indeed, they seek and discover the direction forward for ajummas in Korea on Ajumma day. One of the biggest online communities for ajumma is azoomma.com which is a key sponsoring body for Ajumma day. Ajumma day presents a new slogan every year since 2000 when it began. In 2014, Ajumma day ran under the slogan ‘I go home to work’.

This slogan represents that ajummas are working at home similar to others going to offices to work everyday. In this slogan, home is possibly regarded as the office where ajummas work.
everyday. Therefore the meaning of this slogan, ‘I go home to work’ emphasises that *ajummas* also carry their obligations from miscellaneous forms of different labour as mothers and wives everyday without fixed working hours while their family members are working outside the home. *Ajumma* day grants a sanctuary to *ajummas* from their home treadmill at least once a year through meeting other *ajummas* and participating in activities that are entirely prepared for and by *ajummas*. On *Ajumma* day, they chant the *ajumma* manifesto in unison which defines for them how to enjoy their lives in the capacity of *ajummas*.

*Ajumma* Manifesto (translated from Korean)

As an *ajumma* in the digital information age of the 21st century, I pledge that I will endeavour to do my best as an independent being for myself, my family as well as for social changes and progress.

1. I am an independent *ajumma* who loves myself and recognise the value of my life. I love myself the way I am now and I am proud of myself as an *ajumma*. I do my best to find the right to live happily as a woman.

2. I am a leader *ajumma* who takes care of my family and lead and create a healthy family culture. I do the best for my family life so that my husband and I love, understand and help each other. *Ajumma*, as the pillar of the family, I practice from the small thing to create the healthy family culture.

3. I am an active participant *ajumma* for social change and progress and I am concerned about neighbours all the time. I always think about my neighbours. I show compassion to my neighbours in need and stand valorously against social injustice.
4. I’m an active *ajumma* who recognises my role in the digital information age and challenge to the new world through the Internet. As a principal agent of home information, I endeavour to do my best to inform my children. I actively embrace new technology and try to use it according to social change and progress.

In the statement above, *ajummas* are encouraged to take a more active role regarding communication in the digital information age. Without being limited to their traditional roles such as mothers and wives, it is necessary to have diverse roles and experiences that they did not encounter before the digital information age. Through using the Internet and other new digital devices such as smartphones, *ajummas* are able to be prompt in dealing with changes in society and new technology. At the same time, changes in society and new technology will lead *ajummas* to meet a new world. Thus, *Ajumma* day inspires *ajummas* to link to other *ajummas* who are in the same boat. Furthermore, they can extend their offline and online communities by doing a variety of activities. *Ajumma* day is just beginning and it still developing. However, the one significant thing is that *ajumma* day will be a cornerstone for invigorating both online and offline communities for *ajummas* in Korea; it encourages *ajummas* to broaden their horizons and link to various networks of other *ajummas*.

**Online Communities for Ajumma**

*azoomma.com (representative website for ajummas in Korea)*

There are more than 100 online communities for *ajumma* in 2013 (Park 2013). These online communities have members from around 5 million to 60 million. Azoomma.com ([http://www.azoomma.com](http://www.azoomma.com)) is the biggest and the oldest website for *ajummas* in Korea. It was established in 2000 as the first online community only for *ajummas*. On the website, *ajummas* share useful
information relating to shopping (e.g. sale information, eco-friendly commodities, organic food market, etc.), educational resources for their children and recipes for Korean authentic home-style cooking. In addition, there is a small online community which is called ‘cyber writer’ on azoomma.com. That community is for ajumma writers or ajummas who desire to be writers. In other words, the ‘cyber writer’ community is one of the sub communities on azoomma.com. In the online community, ajummas upload their own novels or essays to share with other ajummas. The peer-to-peer network allows the writers to give and receive feedback.

Moreover, ajummas can organise their own sub-meetings with other ajummas who have same interests through this website. From this, I see azoomma.com performing like a big tree which allows ajummas to organise various sub-meetings (group of branches). Moreover, those branches (sub-meetings) are growing continuously and produce multifarious fruits and flowers (independent ajummas). Through a big tree, azoomma.com, ajummas may enrich their social lives and become independent human beings rather than living just as a good mother or wife. There are various online communities for ajummas, such as 82cook.com (http://www.82cook.com). These communities are designed for ajummas and their limited interests and specialisations. For example, 82cook.com is especially for ajummas who are interested in cooking. 82 is pronounced as ‘Ppal-lee’ meaning ‘fast’ in English, so ajummas share not only special fast recipes, but also know-how of housekeeping etc. The variety of online communities are formed according to regions, schools, hobbies, interests etc.

Smart Ajumma (Ajumma and Smartphones)

The ajumma is considered one of the most powerful consumers in Korea. Most ajummas hold the purse strings in their families, for example, food expenses and child maintenance (Hogarth Kim 2009). Due to increased use of new media amongst ajummas, the range and patterns of their
Consumption have become more diversified and broad. Without the limitation of going to certain spots for shopping, online and mobile shopping lead *ajummas* to a whole new world of shopping. They are able to shop at home or while traveling on the subway via smartphones. The percentage of the Internet usage among *ajummas* is increasing constantly.

According to ISIS (Internet Statistics Information System) of KISA (Korea Internet Security Agency), the Internet usage of Korean women aged 40 to 60 was approximately 14.4% in May, 2002. By May 2012, the percentage of the Internet usage amongst Korean women aged 40-60 increases dramatically. Nearly 47.7% of aged 40-60 women used the internet in May 2012, and this means that more than 30% of those female users’ group increased within 10 years. The rapid spread of the penetration rate of smartphones cannot be ignored either. By June 2013, nearly 32 million people in Korea had a smartphone. According to a report of Strategic Analytics (cited in Korea.net 2013), 67.7% of people own smartphones in Korea which is 4.8 times as many as the average penetration rate of smartphones in the world, which is 14.8%. You can see people with smartphones anywhere in Korea, people of all ages.

With the advent of new technology such as smartphones and thanks to the high penetration rate of smartphones in Korea, *ajummas* are able to go to both online and offline spaces flexibly without constraints of time and space. In addition, they can consume tangible products (e.g. shoes, books etc.), intangible products (e.g. education, travel package, online fortuneteller, etc.) and information through smartphones. Furthermore, *ajummas* produce and enlarge these tangible, intangible products and information through their online and offline communities. For this reason, *ajummas* can be categorised as “Digital Consumer, Information Producer and Information Sharer” (Kim & Oak 2005, p.429).

Firstly, “Digital Consumer” consume tangible, intangible products and information in a digital environment (i.e. the Internet). They shop online the most and a group of *ajumma* is
becoming the core target for online shopping recently. Even though ajummas are now becoming one of the powerful digital consumers, they used to be a minor group using the Internet in comparison to males in early 2000s (ISIS 2012, Statistics of the Internet Uses in South Korea by age and sex section). However, the gap between male and female groups has been decreasing gradually. Finally, Internet use by females in Korea has been increasing continuously.

Furthermore, the increased use of smartphones by ajummas means they engage with consuming products in a digital environment more than before when they would shop online via computers at home. Unfortunately, the percentage of ajummas’ mobile shopping is still lower than the younger female group (aged between 20-30) in Korea. However, it is true that the number of ajumma mobile shoppers is growing continuously (Im 2013). In expectation of the increase of ajumma mobile shoppers, the mobile shopping markets have developed special marketing strategies. The Korea Yakult Co., Ltd is a good example of this.

In Korea, people make a delivery of various things everyday such as milk and yakult (yoghurt). Yakult, in particular, is delivered by middle-aged women and they are called Yakult Ajumma. They deliver yakult to every home’s doorstep every morning. Not surprisingly, their biggest customers are ajummas. In their role of handling the household, ajummas used to pay the price of yakult once a month as cash directly to the yakult ajumma. However, these yakult ajummas have changed to digital technology since 2014. The ajumma customers now can pay the price of yakult with their smartphones. Customers simply scan their smartphones on a card reader machine and the money will be charged to their smartphone bills automatically every month. This is a convenient system for both ajumma customers and yakult ajumma. In addition, it is a good example of innovative mobile shopping markets aimed at ajumma consumers. By using these new ways of mobile shopping, ajummas can go closer to the new types of digital consuming.
Secondly, an ajumma is an “Information Producer”. These days, more and more ajummas are engaging in blogging (e.g. Naver blogs (www.blogs.naver.com)) and using SNS (e.g. Kakao Story). There is not exact data about the statistics of ajumma bloggers in Korea yet. However, one of the famous ajumma blogger’s blog has nearly 40,000 visitors per day. The bloggers who run the famous blogs are called ‘power bloggers’.

In the blogs, ajummas post mostly about their daily lives, recipes, childrearing, travel diaries, fashion and shopping tips and so on. Ajummas write the things that they would like to keep for themselves and to share with their friends through blogging. The one interest thing about ajummas’ blogs can be found in the titles of their blogs. It is not applied to every ajumma, but most of them usually put the word, ‘ajumma’ in their blog title. So ajummas’ blogs can be easily noticed and recognised by a blog’s title. For instance, ‘Happy Ajumma’s Childrearing Cartoon’ (http://plug.hani.co.kr/) and ‘Sunny Ajumma’s Sun and Party’ (http://blog.daum.net/sun1124).
Aside from blogging, there is a very popular SNS among ajummas that is called Kakao Story. Kakao Story is one of the most popular Social Network Service in Korea and it is similar to Cyworld’s mini hompy system. Users of Kakao Story can take, choose, edit and upload photos to their personal page of Kakao Story through their smartphones. In addition, they can easily make comments about the photos on their own Kakao Story page. People upload photos and leave comments to share with their friends and family. For privacy, only approved people who are on the contacts list of my Kakao Story can see photos and diaries. It is not that complex to be a friend of someone on Kakao Story. For example, if I want to be A’s friend on Kakao Story, I can send a friend request to A. When A accepts my friend request, then we become friends with each other.

On becoming friends, we are allowed to see each other’s photos and make comments about the photos as well. On Kakao Story, people are able to not only upload photos but also post notes or diaries. In other words, Kakao Story can be considered as an individual online community which is produced by each single owner of Kakao Story. Each page of Kakao Story can be considered a small room. These private small rooms (individual Kakao Story pages) become a big house (Kakao Story). Thus, Kakao Story is situated in the public digital environment but it is like a very private community that needs an invitation card to look inside.

Thirdly, “Information Sharer” can be explained through the examples of blogs and SNS as shown above. Through the Internet and smartphones, ajummas consume tangible and intangible products in the digital environment. At the same time, they produce information by taking and uploading photographs and writing blog posts. Moreover, another type of new information can be produced from the activities of sharing various information between ajummas. In the case of Kakao Story, ajummas put similar types of photographs of things such as foods, flowers and their children. When an ajumma uploads photos of appetising food she had eaten at a restaurant, her contacts make comments about that photo. By doing so, she gives information about that food or restaurant and
her friends on Kakao Story can visit that restaurant to taste the dish in the photo. Furthermore, if her friends upload photos of that food on their Kakao Story, another group of contacts of her friends are able to get information. This means that, uploading or posting information on blogs or SNS helps people sharing information with their known and sometimes even unknown contacts. 

Ajummas are one of the central groups in sharing the information through their smartphones and SNS.

Thus, ajummas can be defined in three categories in terms of using smartphones and the Internet, “Digital Consumer”, “Information Producer” and “Information Sharer” (Kim & Oak 2005, p.429). However, they perform these activities of consuming, producing and sharing at the same time. And these three activities of consuming, producing and sharing are connected together like a chain. In other words, ajummas do these three different activities at once when they communicate with others via blogs and other SNS, such as Kakao Story. Thus, Alvin Toffler’s “Prosumer” (1980) is partly appropriate to explain more about ajummas and their usage of smartphones and the Internet. For this reason, an ajumma can be described as ‘prosumersharer’ through her activities of using smartphones and the Internet.
Chapter Three

Smartphones and Mobile Media

Smartphones

*I can go out with no makeup on my face, but I can’t go out without my smartphone!*

The above quote is advertising copy from one of the biggest portal website companies in Korea. This statement highlights that going out of the house with a smartphone is now more important than going out without makeup for women. The smartphone has become a thing which people cannot do without these days. Smartphones’ convenience and instantaneity allow people to enjoy mobile communication in everyday life. In other words, smartphones allow people to be linked to the world and other people through having instantaneous mobile communication without constraints of time and space if there is wifi (wireless fidelity) connection. At the same time, people are able to do multi-tasking through smartphone usage.

For example, people can watch movies during a meal in a restaurant and at the same time have instant mobile chatting with their friends who are overseas. Smartphones give people opportunities for doing things that they never imagined before. Besides, new mobile technology such as smartphones can be viewed as part of emergent lifestyle cultures. This means that, the evolution of technology change the lifestyles of people who use those technologies. From 2G to 4G, the evolution of the mobile phone has been continuous since it was first introduced in the late 1990s. In late 2000, the smartphone emerged and has been absorbed by people all over the world in
a moment. The advent of smartphone technology marked an era in the mobile telephony industry and we are now living with them in our daily lives.

The origin of the word, smartphone, remains obscure so its definition is indefinite. There are a variety of views about its origin. For example, the term was used by Microsoft in the early twenty-first century to explain their wireless handheld device (Hamblen 2009). In addition, the term appeared for the first time in print in 1995 for describing the design process of the PhoneWrite (TM) Communicator of AT&T. (Savage 1995). Beyond these instances, there are more varied views about the origin of smartphones however, it is hard to find an exact and formal definition the term smartphone (Abowd, Iftode & Mitchell 2005; Ballagas et al. 2006). For this reason, it might be better to understand the definition of smartphones through the technology. In other words, smartphones can be explained as the upgraded version of the mobile phone and having the function of personal computer and the Internet in the handset. Namely, smartphones may be defined in general as “a mobile phone equipped with desktop-class computing capability and Internet connectivity” (Kim 2010, cited in Kim 2011, p.262).

With smartphones, people are allowed to connect or to be connected to their multifarious networks such as family, friends, and colleagues at work anytime and anywhere through “Mobile Internet” on their smartphones (Abowd, Iftode & Mitchell 2005; Ballagas et al. 2006; Anderson & Blackwood 2004; Marcus & Chen 2002). The mobile Internet capability of a smartphone allows people to do activities on-the-go that were not possible with mobile phones. Mobile Internet on smartphones enriches its user’s mobile life in many ways. For instance, people not only take photographs with a camera on smartphones, but also upload photos to their blogs or SNS pages concurrently with mobile Internet without restrictions of time and space. Furthermore, comments about each photo are made by others who visit to the blogs or SNS pages. Simultaneously, those photos can be also shared by others. These processes of taking, uploading, commenting and sharing...
photos are enacted in one hand with smartphones. For this reason, smartphones are sometimes called a PC In My Hand. This means that, mobile Internet access which is one of the key technical functions of smartphones, brings the smart life to its users through various activities of mobile communication such as mobile chatting, mobile blogging, mobile shopping etc.

Moreover, being ‘always on’ with smartphones enables people to enjoy an agile and flexible mobile life and this is a significant attribute of smartphones distinct from previous mobile phones that have no mobile Internet on them. Thus the definition of smartphones and mobile phones would be different. While mobile phones were designed primarily for the function of calling, smartphones are like a miniature version of the PC with added the function of calling. In other words, smartphones offer not only basic tools such as voice calling and text messages, but also mobile communication facility with Internet access and they allow users to be ‘always on’ or ‘always connected’ to their family members, friends, peer groups and communities. In addition, the smartphone’s Internet connection brings assorted information or media contents such as various types of magazines and webtoons (web cartoons). Of course, previous mobile phone users were able to access the Internet and did several activities with their mobile phones such as to listening music. However, the way these activities occurred between previous mobile phones and newer smartphones is different. Below are several characteristics which inform smartphone cultures.

Firstly, the ecosystem of smartphones is more user-centred than previous mobile phones. Smartphones allow the unrestricted installation and deletion of applications. The constant increase in smartphone use globally leads to the mutual development of elements of smartphones such as applications. Actually, the applications are not completely new things and they are not only developed for smartphones. The feature phone (i.e. mobile phone) also had applications and people used them in everyday lives such as camera, games etc. However, the use of these applications is totally different between feature phones and smartphones. In most cases, previous feature phones
had a closed environment for the installation and deletion of applications, so users are not able to manage those built-in applications on their mobile phones. Namely, the applications of feature phones are originally installed during manufacturing and they are indelible so users have to use those applications without choice. On the contrary, smartphones have a more open environment for applications and users. Users are allowed to manage the applications through installing and deleting constantly according to their needs and tastes.

Walker et al. (2009, p.207) describe smartphones as, “a democratic sort of device, one that supports user innovation and learning rather than squashing it under pre-set conditions of use and complicated instructions”. For this reason, smartphones can be illustrated as more user-centred than previous mobile phones. That is to say, its users can choose and install their own applications without regard to manufacturers. At the same time, they can delete those applications at will. In the case of the iPhone, its users frame the platform through installing, deleting and even developing the various applications (Grossman 2007). This means that the ecological system of the newer smartphone had changed compared with previous traditional mobile phones. In other words, the hierarchical system between users and developers of previous mobile phones cannot be applied to the newer smartphones as this hierarchy has been disintegrated.

Smartphones provide a kind of DIY (Do-It-Yourself) product which allows people to take the lead to and build a user-centric platform. The “decentralised” and “user-driven” (Hippel 2005; Anheier et al. 2010; Brynjolfsson & Saunders 2010; Pascal Le Masson et al. 2010; Stoneman 2010, cited in Goggin 2011, p.152) platform of smartphones has brought the emergence of diversified activities and movements of culture. At the same time, “new forms of collaboration, qualitatively different from what they were in the past, are being developed at the intersections of mobiles and the Internet with new social forms. Digital content is being developed in exciting new directions,
with people undertaking new kinds of activities, representations and instigating new kinds of value” (Goggin 2011, p.156).

Another characteristic of smartphones is the emergence of diversified activities and movements of culture. Smartphone’s open platform of “user-driven” and “decentralised” has created a “participatory culture” (Jenkins 2006, p.3; Lee 2010, p.266). The users of smartphones are not passive, rather they are more active in the use of their smartphones. In other words, smartphones are more than a tool for mobile communication such as voice calling, instant messaging and browsing the web through wifi. Through smartphones people are able to create and produce culture, action, movement and digitally networked relationships. This is possible because of portability and mobility which are one of distinct characteristics of digital mobile technology. Due to the portability and mobility of digital mobile technology, people have opportunities of communicating with broad networks without having constraints of time and space.

According to Balasubraman, Peterson and Jarvenpaa, “Space and time are both independently and mutually constrained in a world without mobile technologies” (2002, p.353). As digital mobile technologies allow people to be always connected (i.e. smartphones), they can share information to enrich their relationships with others and to manage their daily life (Wagner 2011, p. 29). Continuous and ubiquitous communicating can create new forms of culture and activities for example, blogging, instant messaging and SNS. In this process, people are not only visiting other’s blogs or SNS such as Kakao Story, but they engage in various activities interactively, for instance leaving comments, making new relationships with other visitors or hosts whom they never met before. Thus, each blogger or visitor of blogs or SNS becomes a linked network like a woven fabric through those activities such as making comments and visiting blogs. As the frequency of interactive communication increases, this fabric (network) will be woven tightly and the size of the fabric (network) will become gradually bigger.
Moreover, these interactive communications can create new movements of culture through the usage of the smartphones. Indeed, the main motivations for using mobile phones is pursuing information, enjoying entertainment, building relationships with others and relaxation (Hoştut 2010; Wei 2008). By using smartphones, people have more and broader opportunities of doing those ‘pursuing’ activities. According to Lee (2010, p.266), portable digital devices such as smartphones allow people to be connected to the wired and wireless networks and to do media practices in their physical places as well as in digital places. In other words, the media practices of physical places are not separated from digital places, rather those practices are extended from the physical places to the digital places through the usage of smartphones.

For example, developing relationships is available not only in physical places through face-to-face communication, but also in digital places through blogging, SNSing and even mobile gaming. Thereby people are not limited to build relationships, they become “mobile publics” (Galloway 2010; Castells 2000; Larsen, Urry & Axhausen 2006, cited in Hjorth & Lim 2012, p.480). According to Galloway (2010), “these “messy” and “fluid” assemblages of mobile publics are more than just networked. As a politically powerful rubric… more research needs to be conducted into localised forms of mobile publics” (cited in Hjorth & Lim 2012, p.480). These “mobile publics” make new forms of culture and movements through various activities in both digital and physical places.

Lastly, smartphones can emphasis people’s lifestyle practices through the use of various apps. As the nature of Net has changed “from your desktop to your pocket”, it affects people’s lifestyle and behaviour in daily life (Goggin 2011, p.148). For example, things that are presumed to be natural in our everyday lives such as going to the bank, giving a birthday present and shopping at the supermarket have changed dramatically. As the use of smartphones has become more pervasive, new mobile technologies have been developed concurrently. In addition, the most captivating
feature of new mobile technologies is ‘apps’. According to Goggin, “A fascinating feature of recent developments in mobile technologies and notions of ubiquity involves something that we might term a new cultural platform, namely, smartphone applications (‘apps’)—catalysed by the advent of Apple’s phenomenally popular iPhone, apps and apps store” (2011, p.149).

Apps are developed and used by Apple’s iPhone users and they are traded in its apps store. In July 2008, Apple’s apps store launched with 500 free mobile apps a year after the first iPhone released in 2007. A couple of months later, the Android Market launched with 50 apps. After that, BlackBerry App World opened in 2008, Nokia’s Ovi Store opened in 2009 and the Windows Phone Marketplace launched in 2010 (Rowinski 2012). By the end of 2013, approximately three billion apps were downloaded by users in Apple’s app store (Apple Press 2014). This means that the apps market has grown almost 600 million times within 6 years since its launch in 2008. This dramatic growth shows that the use of apps on smartphones has become pervasive and a part of daily life among ordinary people. Through downloading various apps on smartphones and using them in daily life, people are able to do ubiquitous computing easily or instantaneous mobile communication at anytime, anywhere. However, this ubiquitous computing doesn’t bring a whole new thing to people’s lives, rather it makes our lives easier and more convenient than before.

As Mark Weiser states, “Like the personal computer, ubiquitous computing will produce nothing fundamentally new, but by making everything faster and easier to do, with less strain and mental gymnastics, it will transform what is apparently possible… But ease of use makes an enormous difference” (1991, p.104). Similar to Mark Weiser’s suggestion, ubiquitous computing which is using smartphones with various apps is not an entirely new. Actually, there were several software applications for cellular phones (Maitland et al. 2002; Maitland et al. 2005; Steinbock 2005, cited in Goggin 2011, p.150). However, the way of using applications with smartphones is
quite different from previous mobile phones. Indeed, the frequent usage of applications with smartphones affects the life style of its users.

Firstly, people are able to design their phone with apps that they choose. The range of choices and the ability to delete and install applications between previous mobile phones and newer smartphones are different as mentioned above. Rather than having built-in applications that the telecom company or the manufacturer provided, users of smartphones can choose, download and use various applications that they really need and want. In other words, every smartphone is designed by each different users according to their own needs and tastes.

Secondly, many apps enhance our lives through convenience. The ‘convenient value’ is the main reason people use smartphones (Liu 2010). According to Wagner (2011, p.29), “a smartphone has great ‘convenient value’ as its functionalities provide the user with relevant information that helps to manage everyday life and strengthen the user’s relationships”. Not only the smartphone’s ubiquitous computing system, but also various apps reinforce the ‘convenient value’ of the smartphones. As time goes on, apps are being developed constantly and they are subdivided into various categories according to people’s needs and uses. Indeed, the apps market allow anyone to develop an app, so users of apps sometimes can be developers of apps as well. This process of development of apps without a distinct border between users and developers has allowed the creation of a great number of apps in a short period. At the same time, the large number of apps available allow us to lead more convenient lives these days compared with before when there were not few apps for the smartphones in 2008.

How do apps bring people a more convenient life than previously? T-money is a good example to support this argument. T-money is the name of a public transit card in Korea. It used to be a rechargeable card. However, now the T-money card is a smartphone app. Mobile T-money app is an electronic type of T-money card that people can download from apps store. When people use...
mobile T-money, they don’t need to use real money for travel. The money can be recharged or paid according to the payment type. Users only need to choose between prepayment or deferred payment. Once the payment type is chosen, mobile T-money can be used in any mobile T-money affiliated stores. This mobile T-money is not only limited to public transport, but it is available in various categories such as shopping in convenience shops, purchasing movie or concert tickets and even sending mobile T-money to friends or family as a gift. Instead of carrying a wallet or a T-money card, people can do a variety of things with the T-money app on their smartphones. The Mobile T-money app adds to convenience in Korean people’s everyday lives.

Furthermore, this app has encouraged Korean people to change their lifestyle patterns around using mobile money rather than real money. This shows that using apps is not limited to a special group such as the techno-savvy anymore, it has became a part of our daily lives. Moreover, this example of mobile T-money in Korea indicates how smartphones enrich the convenient value of lives in everyday practices. Smartphones are not just newly invented tools for communication any more. They have became an extension of our body (McLuhan 1964) and are engaged in our daily lives (as Martin Heidegger’s term— “ready-to-hand” (1973) —suggests).

Mobile Media

Smartphones are mobile devices which are wireless web-capable and have not only traditional mobile phone functions such as voice calling and text messages, but also newer functions with assorted apps such as real-time public transport information, translator etc. Due to the use of various apps with smartphones, users are able to enrich the quality of mobile communication with broader networks and instantaneous connections through wifi. In addition, the user-centred environment of smartphones creates the new movements or cultures of mobile communication. At the same time,
these useful, appropriate and new ways of mobile communication lead the tremendous increase of the smartphone population.

The constant growth of the smartphone population means the technology of smartphones is now more pervasive (Fogg 2009; Wagner 2011). Smartphones are an indispensable medium of daily life for its users. At the same time, the diversified apps in mobile media are created continuously and used broadly as the population of smartphone users has increased. In addition, the behaviour of smartphone users has also evolved “based on the ability to access almost limitless information anywhere and at anytime” (Wagner 2011, p.39). According to Arul Chib et al. in their research, ‘Midwives and mobiles: using ICTs to improve healthcare in Ache Besar, Indonesia’, the use of mobile phones (or smartphones) enables midwives to become “social enabler, knowledge generator and sharing information” (2008, p.357). These midwives who are patients have difficulties of going to see the doctors regularly due to financial reason and their residences are geographically far from the hospital. For these reasons, Arul Chib et al. (2008) gave the mobile phones to enable communication between those midwives at their home and the doctors at hospital.

This case study shows the positive result of using mobile phones for both midwives and doctors to resolve the difficulties of doing regular medical checkups or having an emergency situation. Mobile phones among those midwives act as mediators between the doctors and the patients who actually cannot come to the hospital in person. According to one doctor involved in the study mobile phones “brought doctors and midwives closer” (Chib et al. 2008, p.357). Direct and instantaneous communication through using mobile phones allow midwives to be a “social enabler”. In addition, they become a “knowledge generator” as they are able to get information from the doctors and to update their medical knowledge at the same time. Furthermore, these midwives are “sharing information” through interactive communication between midwives and midwives or midwives and the doctors. In other words, mobile phones helped to narrow the
physical distance between midwives and the doctors. Thus, the result of this research indicates that mobile phones are a practical tool of mobile communication. They can lead people to change their behaviour of communication in daily life, making it more active and effective. Smartphones are no exception. If previous mobile phones allowed users to do simple mobile communication, smartphones enrich and enhance mobile communication through providing multiple types of mobile media with using various applications.

Smartphones have became the most widely used mobile communication device today with technologically upgraded functions such as wifi compared with previous mobile phones (Cellular News 2013; Clabaugh 2013). Smartphones enable people to experience “an integrated communication package” that includes “verbal, auditory, visual, textual and interactive connections” (Kang & Jung 2014, p.377). This “integrated communication package” allows people to communicate without having an actual physical connection. This unseen connection of smartphones satisfies people’s desire to be connected to society (OfCom 2009). Moreover mobile devices especially smartphones strengthen mobile communication through the use of various mobile media such as blogs and SNS. Unlike other media channels, mobile communication allows the experience of direct communication with people (Ling 2008). This means that people still can experience the direct communication through the mobile communication even though the ways of mobile communication is dislike from the direct one. For example, without having face-to-face communication, direct communication is still possible through making comments on friends’ blogs or SNS (e.g. Kakao Story). Furthermore, the availability of ubiquitous computing on smartphones enhances communication through the use of various mobile media (Kuniavsky 2010; Goggin 2011). Indeed, continuous development of diversified apps encourages the growth of the mobile media use.

The significant characteristics of smartphones are mobility, portability, ubiquitous computing and a user-centred environment allowing of unconstrained installation of various apps.
which allow people to exploit mobile communication especially mobile social media such as Kakao Talk, Kakao Story, Facebook and etc. With this “portable” and “personal” (eds Ito et al. 2005) device, people are connected constantly to the social network through the use of mobile social media. For this reason, smartphones can be positioned as “intimate technology” because users can bring them anytime, anywhere, even while they’re sleeping (Goggin 2011, p.152).

Users can communicate through mobile social media on their smartphones without barrier of time and space due to mobile Internet connection and smartphones. As an “intimate technology” (Goggin 2011, p.152), smartphones are more likely to be taken as part of the human body and life these days. In other words, smartphones are not just a newer upgraded version of mobile phones anymore. They should be considered as more than just new technology that helps to enrich people’s mobile communication. Rather smartphones create new mobile media cultures and represent “intimacy and mobility” through their use (Fortunati 2002; Lasen 2004, cited in Hjorth & Lim 2012, p.477).

The forms intimacy takes is well documented in several research projects that are especially about female users of smartphones (or mobile phones). According to Misa Matsuda's (2009) study of relationships between Japanese mothers and their children, the term “mum in the pocket” explains the intimacy through the use of mobile phones. Matsuda points out that mobile phones can create “a parental network” (Hjorth 2014, p.38) to guide their children especially when they have a psychological health problem. Thus, it is possible for a mum to be with her children through the use of a mobile phone even though both the mum and her children are not physically together. In other words, mobile phones are a kind of a mediator that connects a mum and her children to keep the intimacy continuously between each other.

Moreover, another study by Rakow and Navarro in 1993 shows that mobile phones are used for “remote mothering—contacting children, partners or caregivers while away from their
children”. This “remote mothering” allows women to take care of their family while they’re working in the office. In other words, mobile phones (or smartphones) enable women to do both “mothering” and “working” at the same time without constrains of time and space. According to Leopoldina Fortunati (2009), women have to manage the “double work” of family and career. As a consequence, women are still more likely to do the caregiving even though they have their own personal lives and jobs (Duxbury & Higgins 2009; Hochschild & Machung 1989).

This situation doesn’t mean that the use of smartphones leads women to focus more on their caregiving jobs, but rather to juggle between family and career divisions. As Gregg (2011) mentions, “the online technology is therefore a seductive convenience” because it allows women, especially working mothers, to have flexibility in managing time between family and career. The home still cannot be “a leisure” (Oakely 1974; Barrett 1980; Fortunati 1995; Huws 2003, cited in Gregg 2011, p.53) for women, however, these women are able to acquire the “work-life balance” through the use of mobile devices such as smartphones (Gregg 2011, p.54).

Namely, smartphones not only help keep the intimacy with their children even though they’re apart, they also strengthen the intimate relationships between a mum and children through its connected link. In other words, the use of smartphones and especially mobile social media enable women to keep and to strengthen their relationships with their children or specified individuals and unspecified masses.
Chapter Four

Smart Ajumma Project

In 2014, the research for the Smart Ajumma project started. Ajumma is a special term for middle-aged married women in Korea as explained in a previous chapter. The research for the Smart Ajumma project was conducted in capital city of Korea, Seoul. As one of the busiest cities in the world, Seoul is the centre of business, economics and new technology. It is a hub of cultural activities, fashion and beauty, and the centre of Korean Wave popular culture such as K-pop and K-drama. With the population of approximately ten million in Seoul, Seoumites are living busy city lives every day (Seoul Statistics 2014). And there are ajummas among those ten million people in Seoul.

The key reason for doing this research project is to investigate how middle-aged and married women, so-called ajumma, adopt smartphones in everyday practices and apply it to their daily lives. Furthermore, this research project aims to let people know more about ajummas who are the familiar but unfamiliar group of middle-aged women not only nationwide, but also worldwide. In particular, the reason why this research targets Korean people is to encourage them to realise the unknown side of ajummas living with us as our mothers and neighbours.

Because Korea is top ranked for the penetration rate of smartphones, a variety of academic research has appeared about smartphones by many Korean scholars. These studies took mostly a quantitative method to research user behaviour of smartphones in Korea (Keum & Cho 2010; Park & Shin 2010; Kim, Jung & Lee 2011; Sohn, Choi & Hwang 2011; Yang & Lee 2011). However, this research project not only explores smartphone user’s behaviour, but also uses qualitative study
methods to look more specifically at who *ajummas* are and how they engage with smartphones in their daily lives.

**Method**

(1) **Survey**

In this research, one hundred and one middle-aged and married women participated in the survey. The survey was conducted over three months from September to December in 2014. In total, twenty two questions were to be answered and those questions were categorised into three sections; smartphones; social media and *ajumma*; media. The participants ranged in age from mid-thirties to late-sixties and most of them are full time housewives who also have children. The participants mostly reside in Seoul. Their education and income level were not asked (it was unnecessary for the purpose of this project). The participants for this research should be an *ajumma* in general rather than being categorised by occupation, income or educational level. In other words, the participants are middle-aged (from mid thirties to late sixties) and married women who are generally known as *ajummas* for this research. That was the key point to recruit the participants.

It is difficult to define the specific age range and precise details of characteristics of an *ajumma* because there are no guidelines for defining an *ajumma* in Korea. Furthermore, there is not a lot of academic research about the demographic data of *ajummas*. For this reason, defining the distinct subjects for this research was challenging. Thus, the subjects for this research were chosen with the most common criteria for an *ajumma* in Korea. The *ajumma* participants for this research fulfilled the condition of an *ajumma* in general. Hence, they are eligible to represent the relationship between *ajummas* and smartphones through various answers according to the practice of using smartphones in their daily lives.
The questionnaire was delivered in person and distributed as a hard copy through snowball sampling. It aimed to investigate the general background of the usage of smartphones and SNS among ajummas in Korea. Those ajumma participants answered several basic questions in three categories: smartphones; social media and ajumma; media. This survey is about understanding how ajummas engage with smartphones and social media generally in everyday practice.

(2) Focus Group Interview

For further research, a focus group interview was conducted with a total of ten ajumma interviewees. Some of the participants for the focus group interview were recruited from the previous survey and others participated through snowball sampling and were brought by previous participants of the survey. The participants were divided into two groups, mid-thirties to late-forties and early-fifties to mid-sixties. The reason the groups were divided into two different age groups is because of the result of the survey that was done prior to the focus group. Through the survey, I realised that the characteristics of ajummas and their patterns of smartphone usage differ between the group of mid-forties and mid-fifties to mid-sixties. Thus, I realised that it might be valuable to divide the participants into two different age groups for the focus group interview. It can be assumed that the results between these two age groups differed because the historical background of growth of each age group were slightly dissimilar. For this reason, they had to be divided into two different groups for the focus group interview.

The focus group interview for this research differs from other focus group interview research. At the beginning, to coordinate the meeting time for the focus group interview with ajumma interviewees was not easy. To bring every ajumma to the meeting place together at the
same time was difficult in respect that they are ajummas. Even though the interviewees who were recruited for this research project are full time housewives, they are extremely busy because of being under the unexpected situations all the time as mothers, wives, daughter-in-laws and even friends. For this reason, the meeting time for the interview was changed several times. In the end a Kakao Talk interview was conducted through the smartphone rather than having an actual face-to-face focus group interview.

As this research is about smartphones and ajummas, the Kakao Talk focus group interview might be an innovative way to enhance to understanding of the smart ajumma in Korea. The Internet focus group interview existed due to the development of technology. Focus groups interviews on the Internet are usually conducted in a chat room or on a bulletin board. Furthermore, the advantage of the Internet focus group is the potential to “elicit the top-of-mind answers and emphasise speed over thoughtful response” (Krueger & Casey 2009, p.177). Besides, it provides the “excitement of live exchange” for participants during the Internet focus group interview (Krueger & Casey 2009, p.177). In the case of this research project, it is a combined focus group interview using both Internet and smartphone.

For the Kakao Talk focus group interview, I created two separate group chatting rooms according to the different age groups. Privacy was a concern for the focus group interview in the Kakao Talk chat room so in order to join the chat room participants had to be invited by the host. Thus, the interview content from the group chat room will remain protected. In addition, the interview content was automatically recorded in the group chat room so participants were able to concentrate on the context of the interview and read their conversations panoptically. For me, as a researcher, the contents of an interview in the Kakao Talk chat room can be exported as text file and sent to my email account. Thus, I can record, keep and read the transcripts from the focus group.
For the Kakao Talk focus group interview, the interviewees were asked about twenty questions that related to the relationship between the use of smartphones and ajummas, especially in Seoul, Korea. The interview lasted approximately an hour and the interviewees engaged in a free interview without formality and constraint. Through sharing answers and ideas about certain questions between other ajumma participants, it was more like an open ended debate about the topic of smartphones and ajummas.

(3) Sample Design for Kakao Talk Focus Group Interview

By snowball research sampling, I selected ten middle-aged married women who reside in Seoul, Korea. All of those participants use smartphones in their daily lives. Their age range was between 43 and 63 years old and they were divided into two different groups according to their age range. Each group was invited to separate group chatting rooms for the interview. As a host, I created those chatting rooms for participants in Kakao Talk. Most of the ajumma participants were recruited from the previous survey and the others were introduced by an acquaintance.

The prerequisite for the interviewees of focus group interview was the use of smartphones. There were two non-smartphone users of those surveyed, however interviewees had to be a smartphone user for this focus group interview. All of those participants were familiar with communicating with their friends and family through mobile instant chatting in Kakao Talk chatting room. Besides, they consider chatting with others in Kakao Talk chat rooms via smartphones as a natural way of communication in everyday life rather than using voice calling or sending text messages. Thus, a Kakao Talk focus group interview is not extraordinary for them, rather interviewees feel comfortable to participate.
(4) Data Collection

The survey and focus group interview were asked and answered in Korean as all the participants were Korean and they can only speak Korean. I had previous experience translating for survey and various types of interviews from Korean to English and vice versa. For this reason, I translated transcripts for both survey and focus group interview from Korean to English. That is to say, I worked as a researcher and a translator for this research project at the same time.

This research project has two steps: firstly the survey and then the focus group interview. The survey was designed for getting ideas about the overall atmosphere and general thoughts of the usage of smartphones among ajummas. There is extensive research done about women in Korea. However, research about ajummas and their usage of smartphones is rare. In other words, there is not enough advanced research about the relationship between ajummas and smartphones in Korea to make comparisons. For this reason, the survey was an indispensable prerequisite for preparing the next step of research (namely, the focus group interview).

The focus group interview method brought a wide range of anecdotes and unexpected information. The survey was composed of short-answer questions and the focus group interview allowed participants to answer or discuss questions in deeper and more descriptive ways. In particular, the questions on the survey were for gathering general knowledge about the diversified use of smartphones, other mobile media (e.g. SNS and blogs) and typical thoughts about ajummas in Korean society from the third person perspective. Then, the questions in the focus group interview were designed to explore deeper about ajummas and the relationship between ajummas and their use of smartphones. For this reason, the focus group interview proceeded with actively participating interviewees and a variety of questions unlike the survey. Thus, the contents of the focus group interview did not overlap with the answers from the survey.
As mentioned above, the focus group interviews with *ajumma* participants was conducted in the online space of Kakao Talk. Those participants were invited to either group chat room according to their age group. The duration for Kakao Talk focus group interview was approximately 1 hour. Entire sessions for both the survey and the Kakao Talk focus group interview were conducted and recorded in Seoul, Korea. However, the survey and focus group interview were recorded in totally different ways. The survey was distributed and collected as hard copies and the Kakao Talk focus group interview was conducted and recorded as digital recordings.

The Kakao Talk messaging system keeps recording the conversation in each chat room automatically unless the chat room is deleted. The record of conversation is available to read and to keep for every participant including the researcher who is in the same chat room. Specifically, each Kakao Talk focus group interview session was recorded automatically in smartphones as a type of digital recording, so it is accessible to transcribe the original responses from the participants. Besides, the interview content of online chat rooms can be exported as a text file and sent to an email account directly from the Kakao Talk chat room. For this reason, the extra work of transcribing the interview content was not necessary.

The focus group interview took place in Kakao Talk chat rooms and gifticons of beverage were rewarded for all the participants with appreciation. Gifticon is the combination of the term a gift and an icon. It is a mobile gift that people send to their friends or family as a gift on a birthday or any occasions through the smartphone. The gifticon is now commonly used among people in Korea not only for a special occasion but also for every day life. The way to use these gifticons is easy, for example people just simply show their given or purchased gifticon in the shop. Or they can make delivery of the products, foods or gift through using gifticon on their smartphones. To purchase daily supplies and to give gifticon as a gift to friends or family is one of the pervasive activities through the usage of smartphones among people regardless of age and gender in Korea.
Figure 5. Gifticon

(Left) one of the participants of focus group interview sent a thank you emoticon to me after she received a beverage gifticon.

(Right) an example of gifticon shop in Kakao Talk application. People can purchase and send gifticon through the use of various types of payment such as credit cards, Kakao money, etc.

Findings

The survey and the focus group interview have revealed the experiences and opinions of *ajummas* in Korean society and how they use new technology, especially smartphones, in their daily lives. Even though the number of participants in the focus group was not large, the interview allowed for intensive discussions amongst the participants. In addition, they shared with me their opinions and personal experiences of being *ajummas* in Korea. Contrary to expectations the participants are very satisfied with their lives even though Korean society maintains prejudiced views of *ajummas*. *Ajummas* also enjoy *ajummarous*, or their own, ways of mobile communication with each other through the use of smartphones.
The findings of the survey and focus group represent a small group of ajummas who shared their experiences and opinions. However, I believe the findings of my research could help people to be more informed about and redefine ajummas, who are a large and important group in Korean society. At the same time, the research may encourage ajummas to comprehend the important role they play in Korean society. Two primary sections were categorised as a result of the survey and focus group interview. They are ‘being an ajumma’ and ‘ajummas and smartphones’.

(1) Being an Ajumma

Being an ajumma can be viewed as part of broader shifts in Korean culture about the value of women in contemporary life. No one is born as an ajumma. Rather, we (women) become ajummas over time. In other words, women in Korea are ultimately reserved-ajumma. The participants for both the survey and the focus group interview are all middle-aged and married women who are in their mid-thirties to late-sixties. Most of them defined themselves as ajummas with the exception of only three women out of 101 respondents of the survey. Even though all of interviewees described themselves as ajummas in the focus group interview, their first reactions about ajummas are not so affirmative.

Even though they recognised themselves as ajummas, the negative perspectives are inherent in their minds unconsciously when the first question was asked, ‘what do you think about ajummas?’. The interviewees enumerated words about ajummas and many of the words they listed were negative to begin with. These words were collected and schematised from the both focus group interview and the survey. They are listed in a mind mapping tree.
Figure 6. A mind mapping tree of words from *ajummas* in response to the first question of the survey, ‘What do you think about *ajummas*?’

This aspect of negative awareness of the first impression of *ajummas* appeared in every focus group interview session even though each group was divided into different age ranges. In addition, negative responses to general questions about *ajummas* at the beginning of the focus group interview is what was expected before the actual interview proceeded. Whereas these respondents showed negative reactions about *ajummas* at first, they explained in detail how *ajummas* are treated unreasonably because they are *ajummas*. In these participants’ responses of social recognition about
*ajummas* in general, it can be conjectured that negative awareness of *ajummas* is widespread throughout Korean society. These *ajumma* interviewees felt that *ajummas* are sometimes treated unreasonably compared to how non-*ajummas* are treated in the same situation. An example of unfair treatment between an *ajumma* and non-*ajumma* is described below through an *ajumma* driver on the road.

(2) *Kim Yeo-sa (Mrs. Kim)*

There are various sarcastic episodes about *ajumma* drivers told among people. *Kim yoe-sa* is one significant example to illustrate how *ajumma* drivers are satirically viewed in Korean society. *Ajumma* drivers were known and called collectively *Kim yeo-sa*. Kim is the most common surname in Korea and *yeo-sa* means Madame in English (Ghosh 2013; S 2014). That is to say *Kim yeo-sa* means literally Mrs. Kim in English and it is a sarcastic word for *ajumma* drivers at the same time. When non-*ajumma* drivers see *ajumma* drivers on the road, especially those who are inexperienced drivers, they point fingers at Mrs. Kim and look down at her.

Various media news have reported that Mrs. Kim causes car accidents due to her unskilled driving. However, one thing needs to be considered: there is dispute about the word Mrs. Kim. It is a prejudice to view female drivers as unskilled and inexperienced compared with male drivers. For example, there is not such a word, Mr. Kim that is for male drivers. There is only a word, Mrs. Kim for female drivers. Besides, Mrs. Kim is not used for all female drivers, rather it is limited to middle-aged women, *ajummas*. For this reason, even non-*ajumma* female drivers (i.e. younger female drivers) call *ajumma* drivers Mrs. Kim and look down upon them on the road. Furthermore, even the media makes sarcastic remarks about Mrs. Kim in TV dramas, comedy programs and newspapers.
Soon Kyung Kim:

I hear of a situation that shows how men and non-ajummas look down on ajummas. An ajumma was driving her car and some men shouted to her “go home and cook dinner instead!”. We should say to them I’m on my way to the supermarket to buy rice for dinner!”. I felt really insulted even though I have not experienced this myself.

Hyun Jung Kim:

I’ve been driving for more than 15 years but I still feel scared and expect insults when I drive. I think they (men and non-ajummas) look down ajummas only because we are ajummas.

Ran Kyung Hwang:

They just ignored us because we are ajummas. And people don’t care whether we are well experienced drivers or not.

According to several news reports about car accidents by Mrs. Kim, it is true that some of them didn’t drive carefully or did not have enough driving experience. However, the one thing to be mentioned is that those car accidents and causing nuisance to other drivers on the road is not be limited to ajumma drivers. The very few ‘Mrs. Kims’ who have indiscreet behaviour cause other ajumma drivers to be condemned. In other words, people have a prejudice toward most ajummas as unskilled drivers who are Mrs. Kim. However, Mrs. Kim reacts to the criticism of people against Mrs. Kim reasonably. Even though there is biased perspective about Mrs. Kim, ajummas become stronger and more confident rather than being intimidated by the prejudiced atmosphere about ajummas.

For instance, Mrs. Kim put stickers on the back window of their cars to take action against other non-Mrs. Kim drivers who disdain them with ‘Go home and make dinner!’. The catch phrase
of Mrs. Kim for this sarcastic statement is, ‘I already made dinner and even washed the dishes!’.
This example of the reaction of Mrs. Kim toward the prejudice of people about ajummas demonstrates how ajummas are magnanimous. Their magnanimous character was well presented during the interview as well. While most participants replied to the question, “what do you think about ajummas?”, with negative images of ajummas at first, shortly afterwards, they began to tell the positive side of ajummas.

Seon Kyung Kim:
I, however, don’t think the image of ajummas is only negative. For example, a Guk Bab (Rice Soup) restaurant ajumma or a market ajumma are always full of warmth.

Hyun Jung Kim:
Energy! Ajummas are passionate and active people who lead their lives passionately.

Soon Kyung Kim:
Yes, ajummas are tough as well.

Moreover, they explain how ajummas are faithful to their multiple roles as a mother, a wife, a member of society and a woman.

Soon Kyung Kim:
That is so right, ajummas sometimes become the breadwinners as well.

Ran Kyung Hwang:
Ajummas are all-embracing. They are concerned about themselves, society, their family members, neighbours and friends. Like mixing Kimchi with various seasonings, ajummas only interfere in order to take care of things.

As ajummas are faithful to their multiple roles, they are usually described as being meddlesome. Being meddlesome is one of the representative key characteristics of ajummas through the given responses from participants of both the survey and the focus group interview. The literal meaning of meddlesome is negative but it should be understood within the context of how ajummas are meddlesome in Korean society. It can be an interference however, it can be warm heartedness at the same time. As Ran Kyung Hwang explained during her interview, ajummas are like ‘mixing Kimchi with various seasoning’. They are taking care of here and there; this and that from their closest family members, friends, neighbours to people on the street or in the subway whom they never met before. Thus, the meddlesomeness of ajummas should be explained and understood within the Korean context of jeong1.

Kyung Hee Na:

For me, the meddlesome nature of ajummas comes from both a warm heart and desire to interfere.

Ran Kyung Hwang:

Ajummas have many connections.

Hyun Jung Kim:

Right, they are like messengers.

1 see page 44
Even though these participants have a variety of roles such as a mother, a wife, a member of society and a woman, the one big title that is a link to hold them together is ajumma. As mentioned in previous chapter, ajummas are literally middle-aged and married women. However, the meaning of an ajumma in Korea cannot be simply translated and explained in English. Although they are middle-aged and married women like any other countries, ajummas are a unique and immensely special female group of Korean middle-aged and married women. Notwithstanding they are distinctive group of middle-aged and married women, there is no definite dictionary definition of ajummas even in Korea. They are often portrayed as cliches rather than understanding underneath the surface of them.

Seon Kyung Kim:

I realised that I’m an ajumma when someone called me “ajumma”. The most obvious place where I will be called an ajumma is Jjim jil bang (Korean style spa/sauna). When one ajumma in Jjim jil bang called to me and said “Ajumma! could you please scrub my back?” I realised that I’m an ajumma. I undoubtedly look like an ajumma.

As one interviewee explained how she is regarded and illustrated as an ajumma by others. In her interview, she described how people recognise ajummas according to the baseless social prejudices about ajummas such as they are not trim and slender in figure like non-ajummas. This biased perspective about ajummas, especially their appearance could cause people to stereotype ajummas — the assumptions people make about ajummas based on their appearance such as hairstyle, figure, fashion style and etc. Furthermore, another element of ajumma stereotyping is well known as an aggressive character. I could find interesting point from the interviewees in how they describe the aggressive character of an ajumma with their stereotyped views even though all of these interviewees are ajummas as well. Besides, it was surprising that the younger group of ajumma
interviewees illustrate the older group of *ajummas* aged from mid-fifties to late-sixties as more aggressive character than younger *ajummas* who are aged around from early-forties to early-fifties.

*Kyung Hee Na:*

I feel the older *ajumma* group is a bit ignorant compared to our younger *ajumma* group. The younger *ajumma* group is different I think. The younger *ajumma* group is cool, fresh and has conviction!

*Seon Kyung Kim:*

They (*ajummas*) have a strong charisma. They don’t mind others. They got their way. For example, in the subway, they run and take the empty subway seats.

As two interviewees described above, they differentiate between different age groups of *ajumma*, the older *ajumma* group and younger *ajumma* group. In the interview of Seon Kyung Kim, she addressed the older *ajumma* group as ‘they’. This means that she considers the older *ajumma* group as a separate group. However, the participants of both older and younger *ajumma* group are all *ajummas*. By illustrating older *ajumma* group with the word ‘they’ which is the third person pronoun, it can be inferred that she categorises the whole *ajumma* group as two different groups according to the age range.

At this point, I figured out the group of *ajummas* should not be seen as one, rather we need to understand *ajummas* depending on their various circumstances (for example, the difference of age range). Here is another good example to show how two different group of interviewees reacted to the same question. These different age groups of *ajumma* interviewees present slightly opposing views about the same question, “How do you feel living as an *ajumma*?” Firstly, one interviewee of the younger *ajumma* group replied,
Kyung Hee Na:

I don’t want to be an ajumma. I just want to be a mum and a human being.

She expressed her thought that she does not want to be an ajumma in her response. As mentioned above, she described an ajumma as two classifications according to different age groups that are younger group and older group. In her interview, it can be noticed that she has slightly negative views of the older ajumma group compared with her opinions about the younger ajumma group. However, it cannot be interpreted that the older ajumma group is seen in a negative light by the younger ajumma group. Rather, it can be comprehended that the younger ajumma group see the older ajumma group as a somewhat different group to the younger one.

This probably can be explained with the matter of age difference between the two groups. In other words, even though the younger ajumma group consider themselves as ajummas obviously, they still distinguish between the younger ajumma group and the older ajumma group. In contrast, the interviewees from the older ajumma group characterised themselves as ajummas. The older ajumma group described living as ajummas naturally without hesitation. One of the interviewees from the older ajumma group explained how she felt to live as an ajumma.

Wae Sun Bae:

I feel very comfortable now to live as an ajumma because I can live without pretence. Yes, it is peaceful to live as an ajumma because I can live the way I want. When I was younger, I was self-conscious about so I couldn’t do what I wanted. But now I just do what I want. I no longer feel the need to participate in our highly competitive society.

Other interviewees agree with the idea of being more comfortable to live as an ajumma because they now can live without pretension. Korea is an ultra competitive society and the society requires
tacit unlimited competition from people especially students. The students in Korea struggle to achieve good scores to enter good universities. At the same time, mothers of those students are also struggling to support their children to attain goals, both materially and morally. A good example to illustrate this is the ‘swish of a skirt’, discussed in my previous chapter.

This education fever encourages ajummas to get competitive and become oversolicitous mothers for their children’s education and future. For example, some ajummas who are very aggressive about their children’s education moved house to the Gang Nam area in order to give the best education for their children, especially during the 1980s and 1990s because there were good schools in Gang Nam School District 8. These days, Gang Nam School District 8 is not as highly regarded. There is now a new example that presents the latest education fever: ‘Kirogi-fathers’. ‘Kirogi-fathers’ means ‘goose fathers’ in English. The goose fathers are the fathers who send their children and wives overseas in order to offer them a better education. They are left behind to work in Korea and send money to families to live and study abroad. Namely, the family members live separately in Korea and overseas only for their children’s education.

These two examples of education fever show how Korea is a competitive society especially in terms of students and their education. This phenomenon means that competition among students is actually the competition of their mothers, ajummas. For this reason, the interviewees in the older ajumma group felt restful because they had passed through (and survived!) these competitive years. In other words, they’ve completed their duties as mothers in supporting their children’s education.

Moreover, these ajumma interviewees who are aged from mid-fifties to mid-sixties are able to focus on themselves entirely rather than making a sacrifice unconditionally for their children and husbands. Accordingly, these interviewees explained they feel comfortable to live as an ajumma compared with other interviewees who are in the younger ajumma group. However, this cannot be generalised for the whole group of ajummas in Korea because the context of each different ajumma
should be understood first. In this research, the interviewees of both younger and older group are recruited from the ordinary middle class families in Seoul by snowball sampling.

Those *ajummas* are not born as *ajummas*. They become *ajummas* as they grow older. Besides, they didn’t decide to become *ajummas*. At the same time, no one forced them to become *ajummas*. Being an *ajumma* and living as an *ajumma* are applicable to most women in Korea. In other words, all the women in Korea are ‘reserved-ajumma’ and now we should reconsider that being an *ajumma* is not a thing that women want to avoid. Rather it should be recognised that being an *ajumma* is a natural process of growing as a woman in Korea.

**(3) Ajumma and Smartphones**

The phenomenon of the smartphone boom has come to *ajummas* as well. By using smartphones, it was expected to bring about a communication upheaval among *ajummas*. Indeed, it didn’t take long for the smartphone population among middle-aged and married women in Korea to increase. The percentage of these *ajumma* smartphone subscribers is probably still lower than other groups such as youth, younger women and men subscribers of smartphones. Nevertheless, they are becoming a notable target to research and it will be valuable to discover how *ajummas*, who previously were not the major target of the smartphone market, now adopt smartphones in their everyday practices.

**Out of A Little Pond**

*Ajummas*, middle-aged and married women in Korea, are now getting smarter by using smartphones. This means that, *ajummas* enrich their lives with gathering useful information and broadening the boundaries regardless of location through the use of smartphones. By doing so, they
are able to have more chances to communicate not only with close networks such as their friends and family, but also with far networks such as people from online communities. Thus, *ajummas* could get out of a little pond to a big sea through the use of smartphones in their everyday practices.

*Wae Sun Bae:*

Personally, using a smartphone helps me in a lot of different ways.

*In Sook Lee:*

Life has became much more convenient.

*Soon Ki Lee:*

Yes, if I want to know about something, I can search on Naver (Korean portal website) at any time by using my smartphone.

*Wae Sun Bae:*

For example, if I’m not sure about a celebrity who she was, I can just search on Naver to ask about. It is so easy and simple to search.

*Soon Ki Lee:*

Or even exercise instructions. It is easy to follow because the instruction because there are pictures as well.

*In Sook Lee:*

Yes right. I was like a fish in a little pond before I used a smartphone.
Most interviewees in the older *ajumma* group replied that smartphone use led to a more convenient life than before having smartphones. It allowed them to know and get more useful and helpful information instantaneously through using their smartphones at anytime. When they want to know about something, they use ‘Naver (portal website in Korea, [www.naver.com](http://www.naver.com))’ the most. In addition, as the interviewee, In-Sook Lee explained, she feels like she was a fish in a little pond without using smartphones before. This means that, smartphone usage brought her to see the broader world that she had rarely experienced before having smartphones. The advantages of using smartphones among *ajummas* also affect their life styles as well. One of the interviewees of younger *ajumma* group described her daily routine with her smartphone.

*Seon Kyung Kim:*

I start my day with checking my smartphone when I’m still in bed. I check to see if there are any new messages on Kakao Talk overnight. My younger sister is living overseas so I need to check for her Kakao Talk messages. I used to turn on my computer to check emails every morning but now I look at my smartphone instead. I have my smartphone with me all the time, from when I wake up in the morning to when I go to sleep at night.

*Kakao Talk*

There are differences of degree in the amount of the usage of smartphones compared with the younger *ajumma* group, however interviewees from the older *ajumma* group also adopt the smartphones in their daily lives. As smartphones are widely used among *ajummas*, the survey investigated which applications especially for SNS are used the most by *ajummas* prior to the focus group interview. Many of participants gave a variety of responses concerning the usage of applications for SNS on smartphones. A total of one hundred and one people took this survey and they gave multiple answers for which SNS applications they use the most on their smartphones.
Figure 7. Multiple answers from participants of survey in response to the question of,
‘Which SNS applications do you use the most on your smartphones?’

As it shows in the chart above, the most common smartphone applications for SNS that participants use is Kakao Talk. According to the result of the survey, 95 people out of 101 (approximately 93%) respondents answered that they use Kakao Talk the most as an application for SNS on smartphones. Kakao Talk is an instant messaging application for smartphone users. However, it is more than just an instant messaging application for smartphones. Kakao Talk allows its users to exchange various types of files such as audios, videos and photos. Besides, it provides free voice calling and video calling as well. The group chat room of Kakao Talk enables people to chat with multiple users which makes them to feel they are in the same room together. The group chat room of Kakao Talk is used the most among ajumma users questioned in both the survey and the focus group interview. In other words, Kakao Talk, especially group chat rooms is where they communicate with their family and friends through the usage of the smartphones.

In Sook Lee:

I use Kakao Talk everyday. It is free to use so ajummas love it! I used to call to make an appointment with my friends but now I just send messages via Kakao Talk to arrange a meeting with friends.
Yoon Ja Kim:

Yes, Kakao Talk’s group chat room is so convenient to organise meetings with friends.

Jung Sook Han:

All I need to do is just create a group chat room. And then it is very easy to send a message to everyone at once! It’s so easy!

It is shown that the use of group chat rooms was overwhelming among these respondents compared with any other functions in Kakao Talk such as games. According to the interview above, the main reason to use group chat room of Kakao Talk was for sending messages to several friends at once and organising meetings as well. As it is easier to send the messages to everyone who are in the same group chat room, it is convenient to organise meetings without hassle rather than send the same messages to each person separately. Besides, people in the group chat room can discuss or manage together to set a place and time for a meeting with ease. This means that, everyone can see the content of conversation at one view and even though they might miss the conversation, people can come back to read those conversations at any time with their smartphones. The advantages of using Kakao Talk’s group chat room attracts ajummas who used to call to each friend to organise the regular meetings.

A Bridge

In addition, this group chat room of Kakao Talk is not only for easier organising meetings for ajummas, but also performs like a bridge between face-to-face communication (i.e.actual meeting) and mobile communication (i.e.chatting in Kakao Talk’s group chat room).
Hyun Jung Kim:

For me, chatting in the group chat room on Kakao Talk is like a trailer before the actual meeting.

Kyung Hee Na:

Yes, it is like a time to tune things before the actual meeting.

Ran Kyung Hwang:

Chatting in group chat room is also like an epilogue. After the actual meeting we can review about the meeting. And we suggest ideas for next meeting as well.

According to responses from the younger ajumma group about the relationship between group chat rooms and actual meeting, it can be noticed that they are interrelated with each other. This means that, mobile group chatting and the actual group meeting are not separated individually, rather they interact with each other to enhance relationships among those members of the group. Kakao Talk chat rooms keep the actual meetings going continuously from pre-meeting to post-meeting. In other words, it helps to arrange the meeting with members through group chatting in Kakao Talk and furthermore it encourages members to arrange another new meeting for next time as well. Thus, Kakao Talk group chat rooms act like a bridge that connects a mobile meeting to an actual meeting and a current meeting to a future meeting. As interviewees explained, this chat room is like a trailer, a tuning time before the show and epilogue which links the next meeting or previous meeting each other.
A Notice Board

Kakao Talk’s group chat room is used as a noticeboard as well. Through the use of group chat room of Kakao Talk, *ajummas* share useful information such as various tips for housekeeping and important news such as an obituary notice among members in the group chat room.

*Yoon-Ja Kim:*

I’ve sent New Year’s greeting messages to everyone in my group chat room. And sometimes I share my news, too.

*Jeong-Sook Han*

I also send some photos I have taken and share good phrases that I have read.

Here is a case study of how Kakao Talk’s group chat room is used among *ajummas*. In this group chat room, there are eight members whose age range is from mid-fifties to mid-sixties. They met in the Catholic church and they have kept their relationship more than ten years through having regular offline meetings. On January in 2014, they created the group chat room in Kakao Talk. This Kakao Talk group chat room has been invigorated since January in 2014. In the chat room, each member uses a variety of names, some of them use their real names and others use Catholic names. In addition, they teach each other how to use Kakao Talk such as purchasing emoticons and using these emoticons during the conversation.

Some of members send good phrases, humorous stories, various types of photos such as their grandchildren’s photos regularly to the group chat room to share with other members. Moreover, they use this chat room to plan and prepare their short trip to outside of Seoul as well. They set a date and a place for the trip and determine what items are needed to bring along for each
person. Like this, Kakao Talk group chat room performs as multiple roles such as a classroom (learning and teaching how to use Kakao Talk), a cafe (sharing various types of photos or stories), a notice board and sometimes it becomes a written type of walkie-talkie. Here is a good example to support how Kakao Talk group chat room acts like a walkie-talkie among ajummas (see figure 8 below).

On 3rd September in 2014, the eight members of this Kakao Talk group chat room planned to have dinner and a drink together. Suddenly, one of the members sent a message to the other group members about breaking an appointment because she had to go to Dong-daemun market in the afternoon. After that, another member didn’t notice that the appointment time has been changed from 6:30 to 7:00. Fortunately, she met another member who also arrived early and they could wait for the others together. Finally, they went to the meeting place to enjoy their night.

2014년 9월 3일 am 10:49, Rioba : Do you remember? it is the day today! The perfect day for pork horks!
2014년 9월 3일 am 10:57, Sera : Yes
2014년 9월 3일 am 11:04, Lee Bok Soon : I got it~~^^
2014년 9월 3일 pm 12:04, No Geum Ja : Sorry I can’t make it today~~
2014년 9월 3일 pm 12:26, Lee In Sook : No worries
2014년 9월 3일 pm 12:42, Rioba : ^_^ Hey Noka, I think you chose today?
2014년 9월 3일 pm 12:43, No Geum Ja : No I didn’t~~~ But sorry for not going~I have to go to Dong-daemun market after having lunch today?

2014년 9월 3일 pm 12:44, Sera : You said you could make it last time!
2014년 9월 3일 pm 12:45, Rioba : Anyway, I can save money again.

2014년 9월 3일 pm 12:46, No Geum Ja : So sorry~~~~~~
2014년 9월 3일 pm 6:36, Lee In Sook : Where are you?
2014년 9월 3일 pm 6:37, Kim Oh Soon: I just arrived to the subway station, where are you now?
2014년 9월 3일 pm 6:38, Sera : Unni, we will meet in front of that mall by 7 okie?
Through the content of conversation between members, it can be noticed that they kept chatting to each other in the Kakao Talk group chat room. Even though they did not talk on the phone, the *ajummas* were communicating with each other continuously in real time like using walkie-talkie. Without calling or sending messages to everyone individually, these members were able to know what happened to everyone through reading the content of the conversations in real time. For this reason, the Kakao Talk group chat room can be explained as a written type of walkie-talkie that allows members to receive and send messages to everyone in real time.

The case above illustrates that communicating in a Kakao Talk group chat room strengthens relationships between people of similar ages, or friends. In other words, offline meetings and mobile communication affect each other to create a mutual synergy effect of enhancing the relationship between group members of the Kakao Talk group chat room. This mutual synergy effect is not only limited to close relationships but may also influence awkward relationships and develop mobile sharing moments.

The mobile sharing moment occurs when *ajummas* have a shared experience through sharing various things such as good phrases, photos, stories and good/bad news in the mobile space, especially in a chat room of Kakao Talk. By sharing the moment in the mobile space with their
friends or even awkward relationships, they are able to share the feeling together in the same mobile space. Moreover, having conversations through Kakao Talk chat rooms enables people to have instantaneous and mobile communication which is not restricted by time and space. People have more opportunities to converse with their contacts through their smartphones. For this reason, such mobile sharing moments have the potential to soften the awkward relationships, for example the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law.

*Soon Kyung Kim:*

I have more opportunities to talk to my mother-in-law since we’ve been using Kakao Talk together. She often sends me good phrases and beautiful photos through Kakao Talk. So I reply to her as well. Through Kakao Talk, I talk more often to my mother-in-law compared with before when we don’t use Kakao Talk. Sometimes I try to charm her through Kakao Talk as well, even though it is a bit embarrassing.

Most interviewees explained that communication through the Kakao Talk is conducive to improving and developing relationships. For example, the participants explained they have more opportunity to chat with their children through Kakao Talk. Due to the representative characteristics of Kakao Talk which are instantaneous and mobile, they can communicate with each other without constraints of time and space. Moreover, the use of various emoticons designed and contributed by Kakao Talk add to the visual interests during conversation. Kakao Talk conversations not only offer more opportunities to communicate between mothers and their children, but they may also create real intimate moments as well. This means that, the use of Kakao Talk increases the feelings of intimacy between mothers and their children.

*Wae Sun Bae:*
I’ve learned how to use Kakao Talk from my sons.

_Soon Ki Lee:_

In my case, my daughter taught me how to use Kakao Talk.

Through learning and teaching between mothers and children, the intimacy can be developed gradually. Furthermore, it can be assumed that _ajummas_ are able to have a bond of sympathy through communicating with their children on Kakao Talk. However, Kakao Talk cannot be a replacement face-to-face communication. Even though Kakao Talk helps _ajummas_ to organise a meeting easily, share good phrases, share photos and news with many of members in a group chat room at once and enrich the intimacy with their children, _ajummas_ tend to avoid using Kakao Talk for meaningful conversations.

_In Sook Lee:_

I don’t have any serious conversations in Kakao Talk.

_Soon Ki Lee:_

Yes, I don’t want serious or meaningful conversations recorded as written words in Kakao Talk.

_Hyun Jung Kim:_

I actually make a division between ‘face-to-face’ conversation and ‘Kakao Talk’ ones.

Participants in both the younger and older _ajumma_ groups agreed with the idea of avoiding using Kakao Talk for meaningful or serious conversations. Expressing ideas in the written word has
limitations and Kakao Talk is a form of written conversation in which the emotions of both the participants may be hidden. They explained that Kakao Talk is a type of written conversation which can lead to misunderstandings and brings misapprehension to the participants at the same time.

Seon Kyung Kim:

I was in conflict with my mum after talking to her on Kakao Talk. She and I misunderstood the content of a conversation and we had a quarrel. So after that, I no longer discuss meaningful or serious things on Kakao Talk. Talk ‘face-to face’ is my motto for important conversations.

As Kim illustrated her experience of having misapprehension of using Kakao Talk with her mother, most interviewees agreed that Kakao Talk cannot replace face-to-face communication. Kakao Talk allows them to easily connect with friends and family due to instantaneous communication with the use of a portable device which are smartphones. Moreover, it encourages ajummas to broaden their boundaries by using various applications, sharing useful information and communicating with their friends and family through the use of smartphones in everyday practices. Kakao Talk allows ajummas enrich not only to keep the previous contacts and but also to enlarge newer contacts. However, Kakao Talk is like a bridge that links from the group chat room (mobile communication) to real offline meeting (face-to-face communication). Thus, I can say that Kakao Talk can be interpreted as the 21st century version of the wash place, a ‘Digital Ppal-let-ter’ (digital wash place).
Chapter Five

Wash Place (Ppal-let-ter)

Ppal-le-ter means wash place in English. With the advancement of technology, washing machines replaced wash places which were previously used by village women in Korea. However, there are several wash places which remain as part of memorial spots. From traditional agrarian society before the 1960s, wash places were necessary for doing the laundry. Nowadays it is considered a matter of course to do the laundry at home by using washing machines or going to the coin laundry. However, the wash place was the only place for doing laundry before the 1960s in Korea especially right after the Korean War in the early 1950s when the inadequacy of the water supply was serious. For this reason, the wash place was one of the must-have facilities in every village.

The wash place in Korea was considered a space for women because only women came to the wash place to do the laundry before the 1960s. This can be explained by the strong patriarchal system in Korea at that time. The traditional patriarchal system has been weakening constantly due to the urbanised process. However, before the 1960s, the patriarchy was very strong (Han & Ling 1998; Park 2001).

Another reason why the wash place became a women’s space is because women used to take a bath in the wash place. Before the 1960s, a private bathing facility was not common to every house in Korea so the wash place performed multiple roles. It was a place for doing both the laundry and bathing for women. For these reasons, the wash place was a women’s space where married women were allowed to meet other women and bathe as well.

The wash place was necessary for not only doing laundry, but also for having the chance to meet other women outside of the family. In the wash place, village women could have a variety of
conversations such as gossiping about harsh treatment from their mothers-in-law and husbands or sometimes boasting of their children. That is to say, the wash place in Korea before the 1960s functioned as a sanctuary for village women and allowed them to escape from patrilocality and family affairs for a while. Through meeting other women who were in a similar situation, those village women had the chance to release their stresses and share their hard lives. However, the wash place was not just a space to release stress.

The wash place was also a cradle for information among village women. They shared various stories— from useful information to miscellaneous stories, such as A’s dog had 5 puppies or B’s daughter got a boyfriend. Those stories were usually first shared in the wash place and then spread to the whole village. Moreover, sometimes the wash place was a playground for children of the village. Those children came along with their mothers to the wash place and they enjoyed their own leisure time with other children through swimming, fishing or just splashing around in the water while their mothers were doing the laundry.

So while the wash place was literally a place for doing the laundry before the 1960s in Korea, it was not only for doing laundry, rather it functioned as a place of interaction. It was where village women shared their various stories, the happiness and sadness in their lives. It had no legal basis in being a female-determined space, however it was tacitly accepted that the wash place was a women’s place. There were several paintings that well describe the wash places in Korea in this manner.

Through these paintings, we can clearly see that washing places were considered as a place for women. Here is an example of the representative paintings about wash places. The painting above was by Hong Do Kim. He was one of the exceptional artists of Korean traditional paintings in the period of Jo-seon Dynasty in Korea. The most representative characteristic of his painting was “true-view landscape painting” (Yi 1998, p.354). He illustrated the everyday lives of ordinary
people in his paintings. Of all the paintings of his collection, the best collection is known as “An Album of Genre Scenes (P’ungsok hwach’op)” (Lee 1984, p.246).

Figure 9. ‘A Wash Place’ by Hong Do Kim, during Jo-seon Dynasty

In “An Album of Genre Scenes”, there are various depictions of the everyday lives of ordinary people during the period of the Jo-seon Dynasty. He satirised “yang-ban Confucian society” through his paintings (Lee 1984, p.246). The term yang-ban means “officials of the “two orders”” (Lee 1984, p.147) and only the yang-ban, as a “scholar-gentleman class”, (Portal 2012, p.188) had the opportunity to take the examinations necessary to attaining positions of government (Portal 2012, p.99). In his painting of a wash place we can see housewives washing clothes in a stream and a yang-ban (a man) looking at them secretly.
As I mentioned before, a wash place is a women’s place and men were tacitly prohibited from being there. For this reason, the *yang-ban* is looking at the women secretly, hiding behind the rocks, because he wants to know what happens in a place where only women are allowed. The painting satirises *yang-ban* Confucius society in Korea. The respectable young scholar is shown as a voyeur of women, driven by his curiosity and appetite to spy on women. Even though interpretation of what this painting represents differs between Hong Do Kim and myself, the one thing in common is that it is a painting about a wash place and housewives in Korea.

Then, how can the idea of the wash place be applied to the research project Smart *Ajumma*? The space of the wash place can be regarded as the equal of the Kakao Talk group chat room. Both village women before the 1960s and *ajummas* in 2015 undertake the same housework duties for their family such as washing clothes. In addition, several similarities can be found between village women of the wash place before the 1960s and *ajummas* of Kakao Talk group chat rooms in 2015. Here are six points of similarity that were discovered.

(1) Transformation

(2) A place to keep in touch

(3) A women’s space

(4) A notice board

(5) A bridge

(6) Pop-up communication
(1) Transformation: transformable spaces depending on the purpose.

Transformation is the first similarity of the wash place and the Kakao Talk group chat room. As mentioned above, the wash place is a place for doing the laundry. However, it is possible to transform the wash place depending on the purpose. Firstly, it can be a playground for children who come along with their mothers. These children are able to socialise with each other while playing together in the wash place while their mothers do their laundry. Secondly, the wash place sometimes functioned as a public bath. The water supply facilities were not widely available prior to the 1960s in Korea, so common people often did not have a private bath at home. For this reason, housewives bathed in the stream at the wash place. Thirdly, it was a sociable space where village women were able to have conversations while doing the laundry.

For ajummas a Kakao Talk group chat room is similar to a wash place. The group chat room of Kakao Talk functions as a space to share greetings and celebrate occasions such as Buddha’s birthday, Easter, Christmas, New Year’s Eve and New Year. It also becomes a mobile birthday party place. Even though people may not attend a birthday party, they can still celebrate their friends’ birthday parties in a Kakao Talk group chat room. In the chat room they send various birthday emoticons, messages, e-cards, mp3 files of birthday songs and may even send a gifticon, an e-gift card, as a birthday gift through their smartphones. Gifticon has a diverse selection of goods to choose from such as clothes, accessories, food, e-coupons for cafes or restaurants etc. People who receive a gifticon from their friends through Kakao Talk simply show the e-code of the gifticon at the register when making a purchase. Thus, both the wash place and the Kakao Talk group chat room can be transformable spaces depending on the purpose.

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2 see Figure 5, page 84
(2) A Place To Keep In Touch: maintaining relationships through continuous communication.

One of the key similarities of the wash place and the chat room is they both provide a place for women to communicate with each other and “keep in touch”. Each offers a space for continuous communication and interaction, encouraging the beginning of new friendships and the enrichment of continuing friendships. At a wash place village women met regularly to do their washing. They were able to talk with each other whilst washing clothes in the stream and could head home after doing their duties. A few days later, they could meet at the wash place again and they could possibly continue their stories from last time or talk about events that had occurred since they last met. By doing so, village women were able to “keep in touch” with their friends through meeting on a regular basis at the wash place. Before the 1960s telephones were not in every house and rarely used by common people in Korea. Despite not having appropriate communication devices at that time, people had their own ways of communication to maintain their relationships like the village women in the wash place.

In contrast, ajummas of today adopt smartphones to communicate with other ajummas. These digital mobile communication devices allow them to be connected with each other continuously and enable to do instantaneous mobile communication without constraints of time and space. Unlike village women before the 1960s, ajummas don’t have to visit a physical space to communicate with other ajummas. Rather, they are able to “keep in touch” with each other by using their smartphones and mobile instant chat services and chat rooms.

It is true that village women and ajummas are from different times and their ways of communicating are distinctly different. For example, a wash place is a physical space for face-to-face communication whereas a Kakao Talk group chat room is a mobile space for instant mobile communication such as mobile chatting. However, the principle of communication for both is
similar irrespective of using smartphones or not. Both village women in a wash place and ajummas in a Kakao Talk group chat room are “keeping in touch” with each other through continuous communication even though the ways of communication are very different.

(3) A Women’s Space

The wash place for village women and the Kakao Talk group chat room for ajummas can be considered women’s spaces. While written laws or regulations stipulating that only women were allowed at a wash place cannot be found, circumstantial evidence indicates that the wash place was a space clearly just for women. For example, various paintings from the Jo-seon Dynasty of the 18th century (e.g. Hong Do Kim’s painting) and assorted photos from the 1960s support the idea of the wash place as a women’s space.

A Kakao Talk group chat room can also be considered a space just for women. It is clear that Kakao Talk is one of the largest instant mobile chatting applications people use in Korea and of course it wasn’t designed only for women. Rather the application is used by the broad Korean population, regardless of age and gender, who use smartphones. However the main target for this research project is middle-aged and married women, ajummas, in Korea. Ajummas use Kakao Talk group chat rooms the most compared to other applications and this result came from the survey as reported in a previous chapter. Therefore, it can be assumed that Kakao Talk group chat rooms provide a mobile space for ajummas to maintain relationships with their friends. Anyone who uses Kakao Talk is allowed to create a group chat room for their group members. However, people cannot enter other chat rooms without permission. To enter a certain chat room on Kakao Talk you must be invited by members of the group chat room. This means that a group chat room of Kakao Talk is exclusive to invited members to protect the privacy of members of that chat room. As members of a Kakao Talk group chat room are already known to each other and the privacy of the
content of conversation can be protected, these members are able to enrich the ‘woori (we-ness)’ in the chat room (Chung & Cho 2006, p.49).

In addition, group members of a chat room are able to build intimacy and keep relationships between members through continuous communication. Thus, Kakao Talk group chat rooms, especially for ajummas, can be considered women’s spaces like wash places and there are several reasons why this is so. Firstly, ajummas use group chat rooms as a space to communicate with other ajummas. Secondly, only ajummas can be invited to the group chat rooms that are created by ajummas. Finally the content of conversation in the group chat room is about ajummas, for ajummas and by ajummas.

(4) A Notice Board

In both a wash place and a Kakao Talk group chat room village women and ajummas share a variety of useful information, greetings, stories and gossip. The wash place and the chat rooms sometimes function like a notice board for the women to exchange information. For example, in the case of the wash place, village woman B could hear news from A that A’s father-in-law’s 70th birthday party is next week. Then, B meets C at the wash place a few days later and passes the news of A to C. Like this, the news about A’s father-in-law’s 70th birthday party would spread from mouth-to-mouth through village women with the wash place acting as a kind of a notice board.

Kakao Talk group chat rooms may also act like a notice board. However, it is a somewhat different scenario from that of a wash place. Whilst village women in a wash place spread and hear news from mouth-to-mouth or face-to-face, ajummas in a chat room use a different method of hearing and spreading news. They use smartphones to communicate with each other and they hear and spread the news through the mobile space of the chat rooms. For example, one of the group
members leaves news about the birth of a grandchild in the chat room and others can then read this news without having a conversation one by one like the face-to-face communication of the wash place. In other words, members can simply write down news, information or stories in the group chat room, then other members will read them in real time or whenever they are able to read them.

Thus, the two spaces of wash place and Kakao Talk group chat room perform as notice boards that facilitate the spread of news, information or gossip to other members or village women. Even though the way of spreading the news differs slightly between actual mouth-to-mouth communication and mobile communication, the purpose of their role as a notice board remains similar.

**5) A Bridge: for pre-meeting and post-meeting**

A wash place and a Kakao Talk group chat room act like a bridge that provides links between a pre-meeting and a post-meeting. In a wash place, village women might make an appointment for the next time they plan to come to the wash place. The actions of *ajummas* in a Kakao Talk group chat room are in a similar vein. The *ajummas* have a conversation about setting a time and a date for their next offline meeting in the Kakao Talk group chat room. Then they meet again in their mobile chat room to talk about the offline meeting they had and they will also plan for the next meeting in the Kakao Talk group chat room.

Both offline and online meetings amongst *ajummas* are scheduled easily through the use of smartphones and the mobile communication space of the Kakao Talk group chat room. This process continues unceasingly and both the wash place and Kakao Talk group chat room function as a bridge that links pre-meeting and post-meeting for village women and *ajummas.*
(6) Pop-up Communication

The last similarity between the wash place and a Kakao Talk group chat room is pop-up communication. These two places share unique attributes of transient and perpetual communication between women. Both village women and ajummas do not stay in the wash place or a Kakao Talk group chat room unceasingly but rather they maintain and develop their relationships through pop-up communication. Even though they do not stay together consistently in the same space, they keep communicating each other by visiting the wash place or the Kakao Talk group chat room over time. Thus, both village women in a wash place and ajummas in a Kakao Talk group chat room are doing pop-up communication.
Chapter Six

Digital *Ppal-let-ter* (Digital Wash Place) Project

The six similarities between the wash place for village women before the 1960s and the Kakao Talk group chat room for *ajummas* in the twenty-first century mentioned above, illustrate how both places overlap each other even though they are located in different centuries and they use different ways to communicate. Through this research project, which includes a literature investigation, a survey and a focus group interview, I realised as a matter of course that communication between people has been in existence, regardless of technological advances, since humans have had relationships with each other.

In the case of the wash place and the Kakao Talk group chat room, aspects of communication amongst village women and *ajummas* resemble each other regardless of time, space and even the types of technology they use for communication. They are located in different places with people in dissimilar periods, however these two separated spaces are merged with each other through the single purpose of communication. It could be similar to Larissa Hjorth’s idea that “SMS re-enacts nineteenth-century letter writing traditions” (Hjorth 2005, cited in Hjorth 2009, p.27). SMS and letter writing traditions in the nineteenth-century are entirely different ways of communication if compared through their technical aspects. However, SMS is an extended version of the nineteenth-century letter writing traditions through the use of new technology (i.e. mobile phones) by technical shifts.

As Timo Kopomaa (2000, cited in Hjorth 2009, p.27) noted, the role of wristwatch has changed from the nineteenth to the twentieth century and has shifted to mobile phones. In this context, Kakao Talk group chat rooms can be seen as an extended and upgraded version of the wash
place before the 1960s. Even though the way of communicating differs between village women in the wash place and *ajummas* in Kakao Talk group chat rooms—face-to-face versus mobile communication—the purpose for communicating is the same for both. Thus, specific places for women where they can communicate with their contacts (e.g. village women and *ajummas*) have always existed.

Only the ways of communicating have changed and improved, driven by technical shifts. At the same time, these technical shifts affect the ways people communicate. One thing that we shouldn’t overlook is that the fundamental principle of communication—of keeping relationships—has not changed. This research project, Smart *Ajumma*, will prove how both the wash place and the Kakao Talk group chat room can coexist together. Furthermore, this project will demonstrate how two disparate ways of communication, face-to-face and mobile communication through the use of smartphones, overlap each other in one space. This new original and interactive communal place—a space especially significant for *ajummas*—will be shown through videos that are created with various mixed media including photos, sound and hand-drawn images. The videos are created based on my academic research.

(1) Introduction

The era of Smart *Ajummas* has come. As an everyday communication tool smartphones enable mobile communication with unconstrained time and space. Smartphones facilitate various smart ways of communication. For example, instantaneous, interactive (Lister et al. 2003, p.20), participatory (Kenny et al. 2000; Jenkins 2006; Bruns 2005; Deuze 2006) and interconnected (Hjorth & Kim 2005) communication are possible in our everyday practices.
Ajummas are no exception. Ajummas are now becoming smarter in the way they communicate through their use of new technology such as smartphones in their everyday practices. They are now ‘smart ajummas’ and are becoming smarter constantly according to the development of new technologies. However, it ought not be concluded that smart ajummas are named so only because they use new technology such as smartphones. They also actively attempt to acquaint themselves with new technology relevant to their daily lives.

The use of smartphones in their everyday practices, especially for communicating with their personal connections, encourages ajummas to reshape and further strengthen their own communities both online and offline. As reported in previous chapters that provided research findings through the survey and the Kakao Talk deep focus group interview that were conducted in 2014, ajummas in Korea are now engaged more than ever in mobile communication through smartphones.

Nonetheless, ajummas used to be an under-recognised female group in media and communication research in Korea compared with other female groups, for example youth, young and non-married female groups. However, they should not be overlooked any more. These days, ajummas absorb new types of mobile communication through the use of their smartphones rather than adhering to face-to-face communication as they did in the past. They effectively assimilate mobile communication into their daily lives in order to communicate with their family and friends on Kakao Talk which is one of the most popular instant mobile chat applications in Korea. Hence, ajummas create and keep developing the characteristic Korean middle-aged and married women’s communal spaces and their own ways of communication through blending the use of both mobile and face-to-face communication appositely.
(2) The Intended Audience for the Digital Ppal-let-ter

The creative project Digital Ppal-let-ter sheds new light on ajumma's communication and their communal spaces through the concept of media art. The project aims for audiences to understand how Korean ajummas engage in the use of smartphones as primary communication tools in their everyday practices. At the same time, the project rediscovers these middle-aged and married women’s communication and their own communal spaces that used to be considered under-recognised compared with other female groups such as youth, young and non-married females.

Digital Ppal-let-ter presents three disparate places from dissimilar times in one space through videos. Viewers are able to perceive that the initially unconnected-looking places are actually linked to each other in several ways. The three places I am describing are a real-world space, a mobile-world space and a space between a real-world and mobile-world. The wash place used by Korean women prior to the 1960s is a real world space and Smart Ajummas in 2015 represents a mobile world space and, lastly, the space in between is represented by Digital Ppal-let-ter, a newly made digital space.

Thus, the creative project Digital Ppal-let-ter provides an opportunity for audiences to understand how Korean middle-aged and married women, ajummas, communicate with each other in their communal spaces and to realise the common ground between these two places.

(3) Digital Pal-let-ter (wash place)

Pal-let-ter translates as “wash place” in English. As discussed earlier, the wash place of the 1960s resembles the Kakao Talk group chat room of the twenty-first century and I have described six similarities between the wash place and the Kakao Talk group chat room. Through a comparative
analysis of similarities between these two places it is possible to view them as a symbol of middle-aged and married women’s communal spaces.

*Digital Pal-let-ter* is a newly made digital space where both the wash place in the past and Kakao Talk’s group chat room of today meet together. *Digital Pal-let-ter* will provide an unconstrained communal space, especially for the group of middle-aged and married women, *ajummas*, who used to be an overlooked demographic in the new media technology market in Korea. *Digital Pal-let-ter* will encourage *ajummas* to get out of a little pond and into a big sea through various opportunities of meeting and communicating with other *ajummas* through smartphone use. Moreover, the coexistence of two different places (e.g. the wash place and Kakao Talk’s group chat rooms) represents the continued existence of communal spaces of middle-aged and married women in Korea from the past to the present.

*Ajummas* now become *Smart Ajummas*. This doesn’t mean that they have become smarter only because they use new technology. Rather, they learn to use their smartphones efficaciously so as to communicate with their family and friends in the most effective way possible. For example, they share useful information and use instant mobile chatting. Moreover, the vigorous adoption of smartphones amongst *ajummas* in their everyday practices will contribute to the development of their own ways of communicating and will help to further improve the characteristic communication tools or applications for *ajummas* in the future.

**4) Background Theory**

The Smart *Ajumma* Project will depict how *ajummas* in Seoul, Korea embrace smartphones in their daily lives to communicate with each other in this so-called smart world. The notion of the smart world can be found in and around the implementation of ICT and smart devices (that is, electronic
devices operating remotely and to some extent automatically) as an embedded part of contemporary culture. This project is a creative exploration of fieldwork conducted in Korea with *ajummas* in 2014. The fieldwork sought to explore the motivations of use by *ajummas* around smart technologies. It sought to challenge conventions around a conflation between new media and young people.

This project explores parallels between how *ajummas* in the 21st century and village women before the 1960s share a common way of communication even though they use different communication tools (smartphones vs face-to-face). By paralleling the Kakao Talk group chat room in the twenty-first century with the wash place prior to the 1960s we can examine how the role of communal spaces for middle-aged women has significance both in the past and the present. By doing so, this creative project emphasises the continuity between new and old media for *ajummas*.

(5) New Media

New media is literally a new type of media. This means that it, too, will someday be old, overtaken by new technology. As Flew (2008, p.1) states, “all media were once new” (Marvin 1988; Gitelman & Pingree 2003). Hence, the terms ‘new media’ and ‘old media’ can be changeable according to the times and the development of media technology. The definition of new media is variable, so there are categories used by several scholars—including Terry Flew—to classify new media. Flew (2002, 2005) suggests the combination of three Cs to establish if media qualifies as new media: “computing and information technology (IT), communications & networks and digitised media and information content”. He also lists seventeen categories that explain what new media is in detail and seven out of those seventeen things are relative to support the new media concept of *Digital Ppallet-ter* project. The seven things from Flew’s list are convergence, cyberspace, interactivity,
participation, networks, remediation and speed. With the concept of an interactive new digital space, Digital Ppal-let-ter project contains these seven categories.

**Convergence**

Various apparently heterogeneous categories can be merged in an interactive digital media environment (Flew 2008). The smartphone is one of the representative mobile devices that has a concept of convergence. People do not only use them for audio communication, but also activities such as playing games, mobile banking and instant chatting. In the Digital Ppal-let-ter project audiences will experience the concept of convergence through watching videos. Audiences will see how *ajummas* use their smartphones for mobile communication with each other in Kakao Talk group chat rooms without constraints of time and space.

**Cyberspace**

…cyberspace became the metaphor used to describe the ‘sense of a social setting that exists purely within a space of representation and communication…it exists entirely within a computer space, distributed across increasingly complex and fluid networks’ (Slater 2002, p. 535).

Audiences visiting the Digital Ppal-let-ter project experience the coexistence of cyberspace (or mobile space) and real space concurrently. Digital Ppal-let-ter adopts the concept of cyberspace to present itself to audiences as “a space of representation and communication” which is “distributed across increasingly complex and fluid networks”, especially among *ajummas* within a mobile
instant chat room such as Kakao Talk. Manovich describes “telepresence” as “presence at a distance” and this idea supports the concept of Digital Ppal-let-ter as a place where the audiences experience “being “present”” (2002, p.165).

According to Laurel, telepresence is “a medium that allows you to take your body with you into some other environment…you get to take some subset of your senses with you into another environment. And that environment may be a computer-originated environment, it may be a camera-originated environment, or it may be a combination of the two” (Laurel, cited in Coyle 1993, p.162). The definition of telepresence by Laurel is partially relative to the concept of cyberspace and Digital Ppal-let-ter. Whilst Digital Ppal-let-ter is neither a “computer-originated environment” nor “camera-originated environment” it has combined components of the concepts of both Slater’s cyberspace and Laurel’s telepresence.

Digital Ppal-let-ter is located in a mobile space (or cyberspace) in the present. The space of the wash place prior to the 1960s that is located within Digital Ppal-let-ter can be considered “a computer-originated environment” as it is re-created from a combination of a photo archive of wash places in Seoul and hand-drawn images that were created in the computer program Keynote. A photo collage technique was employed to combine the photographs and the hand-drawn images. The collage technique emphasises the existence of the analogue and digital (i.e. wash place and Kakao Talk group chat room) in Digital Ppal-let-ter. The Kakao Talk group chat room is shown through a video that is located within Digital Ppal-let-ter and can be considered a cyberspace.

**Interactivity**

The concept of interactivity allows users of new media to be active participants rather than a passive audience. For the Digital Ppal-let-ter project there will not be interactive communication between
ajummas and audiences because it is presented in videos. However, the concept of interactivity can be found in videos showing ajummas engaging in mobile communication with each other through the Kakao Talk group chat room. Furthermore, there might be interactivity between ajummas in Seoul and audiences when the physical exhibition of Digital Ppal-let-ter is installed in the future or if the videos are uploaded on video sharing websites such as Vimeo or YouTube. The sites allow audiences to leave comments about videos and this can be considered as interactivity as well.

**Participation**

As Kenny and Colleagues (2000) argue, the media needs to reconsider the concept of traditional sender and receiver models of communication (Shannon & Weaver 1949). This means that the users of new media are no longer passive audiences as in the traditional sender and receiver models of communication, rather, they are able to participate in new media interactively. Jenkins’ (2006) ‘participatory culture’ or Rheingold’s (2008) ‘participatory media literacy’ explicated the participatory media. The concept of participation is not simply a two-way interaction between users and new media. Constant activities of interactive participation by users of new media should be expanded to include Berners-Lee’s concept of intercreativity:

“not just the ability to choose, but also the ability to create….We should be able not only to interact with other people, but to create with other people. Intercreativity is the process of making things or solving problems together” (Berners-Lee 1999, p.182, cited in Burnett & Marshall 2003, p.58).

In other words, the concept of participation and interactivity in new media should not be simply limited to the users’ activity of choice, rather it needs to be connected to the activity of creating. That is to say, Digital Ppal-let-ter should not be interpreted simply as a newer version of the old
Rather Digital *Ppal-let-ter*, should be comprehended as a place where intercreativity is constant.

As an interactive digital place, Digital *Ppal-let-ter* inosculates the past and the present by allowing audiences to experience an intercreative space. Hence, someday audiences will have the opportunity to interact with *ajummas* in Seoul, which is more than 12,000 kilometres distance from Melbourne, through mobile instant chatting if audiences desire to do so. Besides, these activities of participation and interactivity between audiences in Melbourne and *ajummas* in Seoul will support Castells’ idea (1996) of how new media forms the social network as technology advances. Unfortunately, it won’t be available at this time and the creative project will be shown as videos.

**Networks**

*Digital Ppal-let-ter* is a space to present a network of village women in the 1960s and *ajummas* in 2015. The women are from different times and different places however, in *Digital Ppal-let-ter*, the two groups are allowed to meet because it is an imaginary place where there are no barriers to time and space. In this imaginary space audiences will see the two networks merged into one big and new network of *ajummas*.

This newly merged network encourages audiences to understand how middle-aged and married women in Korea have their own modes of communication and develop these as technology shifts from the past to the present. In other words, *Digital Ppal-let-ter* shows the changing history of communication among middle-aged and married women in Korea since 1960, and it exhibits the interrelationship of women’s communication between the pre-smartphone era (1960s) and the smartphone era (2015). Furthermore, the combination of the entirely different spaces of the wash place and the Kakao Talk group chat room demonstrates how these two different places are
connected and merged into one imaginary space by reason of having a common ground in the communal spaces used by middle-aged and married women in Korea.

**Remediation**

The meaning of remediation was advocated by Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin. According to Bolter and Grusin (1999), remediation is

…a medium is that which remediates. It is that which appropriates the techniques, forms, and social significance of other media and attempts to rival or refashion them in the name of the real. A medium in our culture can never operate in isolation, because it must enter into relationships of respect and rivalry with other media (p.65).

In other words, remediation cannot stay independent, rather it is linked or belongs to media relationally that appear beforehand or afterward. Furthermore, remediation is located socially and culturally where the media is. Hence, as McLuhan states, “the ‘content’ of any medium is always another medium” (1964, p.15). This means that the content is the principal, whereas a medium is just a tool to present that content. For example, the content of face-to-face conversation in the wash place during the 1960s is analogous with mobile conversation in a Kakao Talk group chat room in 2015 as both of them are one of the ways of communication among middle-aged and married women.

Although the ways of communication [communication tools] are different between face-to-face conversation and conversation in mobile chat rooms through the use of smartphones, the content [communication amongst middle-aged and married women in Korea] is similar. In this
respect, the in-between space of the wash place before the 1960s and the Kakao Talk group chat room in the twenty-first century can be considered as remediation. This means that the in-between space of face-to-face communication and mobile communication is a common ground of communication among middle-aged and married women in Korea regardless of time and space. In other words, these two different spaces overlap together through the process of remediation.

Through the in-between space of the wash place and the Kakao Talk group chat room, it will be evident that the vigorous and pervasive mobile communication by *ajummas* in group chat rooms is not a new culture. Rather, people will logically perceive that communication amongst middle-aged and married women has always existed as it has for everybody else. At the same time, the women have shaped their communal places through the characteristic ways in which they communicate with each other.

Furthermore, the in-between space of the Smart *Ajumma* creative project is a uniquely evolved form of remediation as it functions interactively between older media [face-to-face communication] and newer media [mobile communication]. For the creative project of Smart *Ajumma*, interactive remediation is possible because remediation is “not a linear history”, which means that newer media remediates older media and vice versa (Bolter and Grusin 1999, p.55). Namely, the remediation for this project is not developed in one direction as older media and newer media interactively remediate each other. Ultimately, the newer in-between space can be created through this interactive process of remediating in the Smart *Ajumma*’s creative project.

The outcome of the project was accomplished through both the literature review study and empirical research through the survey and the focus group interview with actual *ajummas* in Seoul, Korea. As mentioned in the chapter ‘Research Findings’, most participants in both the survey and the focus group interview answered that communicating in Kakao Talk’s group chat rooms has become their principal reason for using smartphones. In addition, the use of Kakao Talk’s group
chat rooms enhances the frequency of communication and enriches the quality of communication among *ajummas*.

However, the one prominent thing which has been clarified through the research is that the group of *ajummas* and their communication through the use of smartphones is now significant enough and unique enough to investigate. For this reason, the creative project addresses how *ajummas* have become smart *ajummas* not only through using smartphones, but also through developing their own communal spaces and unique communication methods in their everyday lives.

Moreover, I would like to highlight the continuity in communication between women, especially those who are middle-aged, married and living in Korea. The reason and the purpose of communication has remained similar between the village women in the wash place before the 1960s and *ajummas* in Kakao Talk group chat rooms in the twenty-first century. Through this creative project, audiences will be reminded that old media and new media constantly remediate each other. Furthermore, new media will become old media due to the advent of new technology.

*(6) New Media Art*

Digital media art is generally comprehended as art that adopts digital technology as a primary part of creation. It is sometimes called new media art due to its use of new media technology such as computer technology. The term new media is impermanent and it can be changeable according to changes in technology. For this reason, digital media art is a more useful term to describe art that uses digital technology. There are various views of when digital media art first started. According to Tribe, Jana and Grosenick (2006), the New York New Media Association began in 1994 and at the same time the term of “New Media Art” was used by people such as artists, curators and critics (p. 6).
New media art as a concept originates from around the 1960s. Video was considered new media in the 1960s when the artist Nam June Paik adopted video as an art form. As Nam June Paik emphasised, “As collage technique replaced oil paint, so the cathode-ray tube will replace the canvas” (1965, cited in Dempsey 2002, p.257). His art was considered sensational in the 1960s and he embraced all sorts of new technology as new tools to create his art works including video, sound recordings and television.

New media art is an art that embraces new media as tools to create art forms. The advantage of adopting New media art for art projects is that it broadens the range of realisable ideas for an artist. At the same time, audiences have the chance to enjoy the art interactively. As mentioned above, one of the characteristic features of new media is interactivity and this can be applied to new media art as well. Rush claims that “Interactive has emerged as the most inclusive term to describe the type of art of the digital age” (1999, p.171). To create interaction new media art encourages its audiences to take an active approach with the art works through interactive participation. There are various theories and practices of new media art and here I will attempt to highlight only the basic theories of new media art that are related to the Digital Ppal-let-ter project.

As a type of new media art form, the Digital Ppal-let-ter project will embrace various forms of media including new media technology, for example, hand-drawn images, archive photographs, landscape sounds, photo collages and mobile instant messaging application (e.g. Kakao Talk) on smartphones. While the project is not entirely designed and installed with new media technology it takes the combination of traditional and new to emphasise that Digital Ppal-let-ter is a place which transcends time and space. Thus, media will be merged with each other and will create a new digital space of communication for ajummas, Digital Ppal-let-ter.
(7) Inspiration

*Digital Ppal-let-ter* is a new digital space which illustrates the interactively remediated space and time of both the washtub place before the 1960s and Kakao Talk’s group chat room in the 21st century. *Digital Ppal-let-ter* will encourage audiences to consider the existence of middle-aged and married women’s communal space that has formed and has been developed by those women from the non-digital (pre-smartphone) era before the 1960s to the digital (smartphone) era in 2015.

*Digital Ppal-let-ter* will take both analogue and digital technology to present a new digital space where *ajummas* communicate with each other. It is an imaginary space located in a time of coexistence between the face-to-face communication and the mobile digital communication. In other words, *Digital Ppal-let-ter* is located in an in-between space and time of actuality and digitality. For this reason, the creative project of *Digital Ppal-let-ter* is a converged metaphorical space of communication that transcends time and space among middle-aged and married women in Korea.

*Digital Ppal-let-ter* is an imaginary space that does not exist in the real world. However, it asks audiences to think about how communication amongst middle-aged and married women in Korea has always existed even though various communication tools and the locations of communal spaces have changed over time. *Digital Ppal-let-ter* aims to emphasise that specific features of communication have developed subliminally through continuous interactive communicating among middle-aged and married women in Korea.

Middle-aged and married women used to be considered a peripheral group by the digital technology industry in Korea whereas younger female groups were given attention. However, it is time to look intensively at how these middle-aged and married women, *ajummas*, communicate with each other in the pre-digital communication era before the 1960s to the digital communication
era of today. In general, *ajummas* used to be considered a group of ordinary middle-aged and married women but they are not ordinary when people look at them with affection. The group *ajummas* now attract respectful attention from the digital technology industry and Korean society. The creative project *Digital Ppal-let-ter* presents how the ordinary but not ordinary *ajummas* build their own communal spaces and have their own ways of communicating which have developed in line with technological developments in communication.

*Digital Ppal-let-ter* is based on Korean sentiment but the convergence of digital and analogue technology in the project is universally relatable. To create this complicated but poetic and new experimental media art project that includes interdisciplinary academic research and mixed media art forms I have been inspired by three Korean artists.

**Nam June Paik**

Elizabeth Broun, Director of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, said about Nam June Park: “if Picasso stands astride the first half of the 20th century like a colossus, Nam June Paik is the centre of gravity for all that was new in the second half of that 100-year span. We are only now learning how profoundly his imagination embraced and transformed our world” (Broun 2012, cited in SmithSonian 2012). Nam June Paik was born in Korea in 1932 and is known as the ‘father of video art’. He brought video to an art form and created innovative media-based art works until his death in 2006. Nam June Paik’s imaginative and epoch-making art works are still influencing many younger artists in the world today. Although there is a diverse range in his art works that can be an inspiration for my creative project *Digital Ppal-let-ter*, I would like to choose one of his video installation art works that influenced my project the most.
The title of the work that most inspired me is ‘Ommah (2005)’. Ommah is the last video work of Nam June Paik, made in 2005, just one year before he died. Ommah is an informal term or familiar way of calling one's mother in Korean, similar to ‘mom or mummy’ in English. Ommah illustrates the Korean spirit the most among his art works. It is a one-channel video installation for 19-inch LCD monitor that is covered by a light apricot-coloured silk durumagi, which is a traditional Korean women’s overcoat. He placed the durumagi in a bamboo frame that looks like arms spread wide. Then a 19-inch LCD monitor was located in the lower centre of the durumagi and it appears that the LCD monitor is situated in the area of a woman’s womb. A video of three young girls’ playing is shown on a loop.

They are the daughters of a Korean curator in America who met Nam June Paik through an interview. The three young girls wear rainbow-coloured hanbok which is Korean traditional clothes and a white-coloured one-piece dress which is a type of Western style of clothing. These two different styles of young girls’ clothes are shown in each video alternately. In the video they are dancing, skipping rope and playing ball. The noticeable is that the young girls keep calling or yelling the word ommah repeatably. They call ommah with a proud voice rather than a plaintive voice and when I hear the voices of those young girls calling ommah, I remember how I wanted to run to show my mum what I’d done in school when I was a primary school student. Whether it was good or sometimes a bad thing I called to my mum to share the stories all the time. Ommah is such a presence that I always want to call to her whenever I am happy, sad, sick or even having no reason. I imagine how Nam June Paik felt about his ommah while he was staying in New York, far from Korea. As I’ve been living overseas for a long time, I can imagine how much he missed his ommah and home every moment. For this reason, Nam June Paik might intend to direct these young girls in the video to keep calling their ommah continuously to express his own longing for his ommah and motherland.
The arrangement of the *durumagi* on the bamboo frame and LCD monitor give a suggestion of comfort and the peace just like a mother’s arms. From my point of view, it seems like a mother is always waiting for me wherever I am and whatever I do, she will be waiting for me with her arms spread wide. Nam June Paik’s *Ommah* presents an eternally present mom for himself and ourselves. There are distant memories of his mother, home and motherland in *Ommah*. It might be assumed that the reason why the title is *Ommah* instead of *Mum* is because this Korean word could arouse Korean sentiment and images. In the same context, the titles *Smart Ajumma* and *Digital Ppal-let-ter* are Korean words that were written down the way they sound. Although the titles may be difficult to pronounce for non-Korean speakers, I wish to emphasis the Korean sentiment through using Korean words as a title of this thesis and creative project rather than a translated English title.

*Ommah* and *Digital Ppal-let-ter* fundamentally talk about mothers in Korea. *Ajummas* in *Digital Ppal-let-ter* are our mothers. In the beginning, my mother inspired me the most to start this research project. I was impressed by how my mother adopted a smartphone for communication in her everyday practices although she had to learn how to use it step by step. My mother is still unfamiliar with using the complicated functions of a smartphone yet she keeps endeavouring to learn and use it to communicate with her friends and especially me, her daughter who lives overseas. Then I realised how much we missed and did not notice our mothers and *ajummas*. As a ‘reserved-ajumma’ of the future, I wanted to investigate *ajummas*, their ways of using smartphones in their daily lives and their own spaces of communication from the past to the present. *Ajummas* are our mothers and women before being categorised as *ajummas*.

In Nam June Paik’s *Ommah*, the repetition of the video images of the young girls placed near a woman’s womb reminds me of the existence of my mother who is with me all the time in my mind. I am from my mother and she always stay with me in my mind, however there are many things I might not know about her. For this reason, an academic written thesis and a creative project
of video are produced to help people understand more about *ajummas* and their usage of smartphones.

The repetition of the video images through that faded garment lead me to imagine Nam June Paik’s childhood in Korea. At the same time, it brings me to the experience of my childhood with my mother. Similarly, videos for *Digital Ppal-let-ter* intend to encourage people to imagine the life of village women before the 1960s and *ajummas* in 2015. This video presents a condensed story of women’s communal spaces and their ways of communication from the 1960s to 2015 based on the usage of mixed media.

![Figure 10. Ommah (2005) by Nam June Paik](image-url)
Ommah seems to me a last chapter or summary of his life as an artist. It reminds me of more than just how he missed his ommah and motherland. This video allows me to imagine the journey of Nam June Paik’s life as an artist and the youngest son in his family. Through Ommah, I can see who Nam June Paik was and what ommah or my mother means to me. Thus, I hope people are inspired to rethink how they feel about their mothers, or ajummas, through Digital Ppal-let-ter.

Yeon Doo Jung

Yeon Doo Jung is a media artist based in Seoul, Korea. He uses various media in his art works such as photos, video clips and performances. Most of Yeon Doo Jung’s artworks, focus on the ordinary people who we might meet in our daily lives. To illuminate the lives of various social groups he tries to reflect the relationship between society, outward appearance of human and the human mind in his art. He expresses interests and sympathies about the society where people live and the people who are illuminated in his art works include immigrants in New York who are usually shunned in society and a group of middle-aged men, mostly in their forties and ardent members of a fan club for the Korean girl group Crayon Pop.

Yeon Doo Jung observes these ordinary people and he represents them ordinarily as possible in his art works. The Location series (2007; 2009) and Six Points (2010) inspired Digital Ppal-let-ter in some ways. The Location series is an exhibition series about different locations that are combined with photos of locations and hand-drawn paintings of locations. The imprecise boundary between reality and created reality leads audiences to be unsure as to which part is real or not. The concept of an imprecise boundary between reality and created reality in Yeon Doo Jung’s artwork can be transferred to Digital Ppal-let-ter. Digital Ppal-let-ter’s imprecise boundary between different places and dissimilar times will bring audiences to a new digital, communal place where
they can meet *ajummas* in Korea. The communal place allows reality, created reality, actuality and digitality to overlap.

Another similarity between Yeon Doo Jung’s artwork and *Digital Ppal-let-ter* is the use of mixed media. Yeon Doo Jung’s artwork combines a variety of media such as photos and handcrafted artifacts together and *Digital Ppal-let-ter* will also mix various media for example, photo archives, hand-drawn images and a mobile chat room. Through the use of dissimilar attributes of media for instance, the compound between analogue media (e.g. hand-drawn images) and digital media (e.g. edited digital photo archives and video clips) in one space will emphasise one of the characteristic elements of *Digital Ppal-let-ter*, that being the coexistence of different places that are from the past and to the present in one place. Through arranging dissimilar attributes of media in one space, the heterogeneous concept of imaginary new digital communal space for *ajummas* can be created and shared by audiences.
Six Points (2010) is another artwork by Yeon Doo Jung that inspired the creative concept of Digital Ppal-let-ter. Six Points (2010) is a video work which consists of thousands of photographs of six inner-city districts of New York. The photographs are displayed sequentially to appear as a slow-moving pan along each streetscape. The six inner-city districts of New York are communities with immigrants from different backgrounds: Chinatown, Little Italy, the Indian Community, the Spanish Community, the Russian Community and Korea Town. Narratives spoken by people with typical accents from each community overlay the video. The combination of imagery, gentle pacing and first person narratives encourages us to empathise with the immigrants’ experiences and memories and wonder at the vastness of a city such as New York.

Digital Ppal-let-ter also uses amended photographs, in this case of real Ppal-let-ter (wash places) in the 1960s, to help audiences see how a wash place in the 1960s looked. In the same context, showing various video episodes of ajummas and their use of smartphones in their daily lives encourages audiences to understand how ajummas communicate and what ajummas do with each other. These two very different and yet very similar communal spaces among middle-aged women in Korea will be presented through videos with a variety of techniques such as photo collage and hand-drawn images. Various sounds such as ajummas laughing or chatting, typing on smartphone keypads and the notification sound of Kakao Talk are installed with the photographs. These creative devices will allow audiences to imagine how ajummas communicate with each other from the pre-smartphone era to the smartphone era. Furthermore, audiences will recognise the existence of smart ajummas in Seoul in the 21st century and it is hoped that audiences will look more deeply at who those ajummas are, the meaning of ajummas in Korean society and how the women have adapted their method of communication along with changes in technology.

In summary, several points of similarity can be found between Yeon Doo Jung’s artworks and Digital Ppal-let-ter. Among these similarities the most notable one is the inspiration taken from
the lives of “ordinary” people. Their subjects are ordinary people and the content is about their everyday lives. The techniques that Yeon Doo Jung uses in the Location series (2007; 2009) and Six Points (2010) also inspire the concept of Digital Ppal-let-ter. Thus, Yeon Doo Jung’s artworks can be considered as influencing the concept of Digital Ppal-let-ter in both content and technique.

Duck Hyun Cho

Duck Hyun Cho is one of the leading contemporary installation artists in Korea. He is not a feminist artist however he examines the lives of Korean women in his art works. According to Cho (2009), “When I became a father to my daughter, it naturally happened that I became more interested in women, especially the lives of women in Korea. I tried to use needlework and fabric as materials due to women being the subject of my art works. However, I realised that the history of women and women’s issues is complex and cannot be captured on canvas” (cited in Yoon 2009).

Figure 12. Nora Collection (2008) pencil and conté, Installation of variable, by Duck Hyun Cho
He uses old and forgotten photographs of Korean history such as the first Korean fashion designer, Nora Noh. In *Nora Collection* (2008) he has replicated photographs from the designer’s life on a grand scale by redrawing them in pencil and conté, thereby creating a whole new picture with his own interpretation. In the artwork the photo-replica drawings are installed with real fabric cascading from the wall onto the floor of the space and appearing to be an extension of the fabric in the drawings. The combination creates a nostalgic narrative in which the viewer is left to make her own connections and interpretations. It seems like the artist intends to bring the forgotten history of one woman to the present and even to extend her history into the future. The different media in *Nora Collection* (2008) symbolises the continuity of Korean women’s history from the past to the present. In this context, Duck Hyun Cho’s *Nora Collection* and *Digital Ppal-let-ter* are in some ways analogous artworks. *Nora Collection* contains one Korean woman’s forgotten history and its connectivity from the past to the present and, similarly, *Digital Ppal-let-ter* represents unnoticed, middle-aged women and the evolution of their modes of communication.

**(8) Digital Ppal-let-ter Plan**

As mentioned above, *Digital Ppal-let-ter* is a new digital space where the wash place before the 1960s and a Kakao Talk group chat room in 2015 coexist together. As an imaginary space that has been planned and created based on interdisciplinary research and creative concept of thinking, I have carefully considered how to present the concept of *Digital Ppal-let-ter* to audiences. Initially I planned for *Digital Ppal-let-ter* to be exhibited in a gallery or other space in the form of an installation. However, the plan changed to using video due to the difficulty of installing a reproduction of the wash place and the Kakao Talk group chat room. Through the video, the audience can experience the wash place prior to the 1960s with village women and the Kakao Talk group chat room in 2015 with *Smart Ajummas* at the same time.
The project will also encourage audiences to reconsider the communal spaces, the ways of communication and the communities of middle-aged and married women, *ajummas*, in Korea from the past to the present. Furthermore, it can be expected that this opportunity will increase interest in *ajummas* and their ways of communication among audiences and the general public. Hence, both the creative project, *Digital Ppal-let-ter*, and the research project, *Smart Ajumma*, will awaken thoughts and value about the existence of *ajummas* and their unique way of communicating that has gone unnoticed.

**Techniques for the Video**

**Mobile Photography**

The photos for the *Digital Ppal-let-ter* project were all taken on a iPhone 5 over a period of 2 years from 2014 to 2015. The majority of photos were taken in Seoul, Korea. The subjects of the photos are mostly middle-aged women, *ajummas*, in Seoul. The photos were taken randomly in Seoul during the field research in 2014 and 2015. The reason why an iPhone was used as a camera for this project is because it has many advantages such as portability, convenience and instantaneous viewing. Using an iPhone camera for making this creative project has reminded me of the diverse theories about digital communication technology, especially the use of mobile communication devices (e.g. smartphones).

The portability of the iPhone is related to the idea of Marshall McLuhan’s “extensions of man (1964)” as an iPhone allowed me to take photos whenever I found suitable subjects. At the same time, the iPhone allowed me to easily produce a media product (a video) which is related to Jenkins’ idea of ‘participatory culture’ (2006). Luke’s concept of the ‘phoneur’ (2006)—coming from the words ‘flaneur’ and phone—and means our mobile lifestyles are strongly related to the use
of a mobile phone. I became a ‘phoneur’ as I took photos while observing people and the city in Seoul and it became a natural part of daily life during my stay in Seoul for the field research in 2014 and 2015.

The subjects of the photos that were used in the video were not asked for permission, however their faces were covered by a hand-drawn sticker of a smiley face to protect each subject’s privacy. Most photos of ajummas that were used in the video are not taken from the front and some of them are blurry. Consequently, the subjects in the photos that were used in the video are not recognisable. In addition, the video in the Digital Ppal-let-ter project is not made for commercial use, rather it is produced entirely for a creative project which is a part of the PhD research project. For this reason, the privacy issues of photos that were used in the video should not be a problem at all.

**Keynote Editing**

To edit the video for the project I used the Keynote program the most. Keynote is a software program for creating presentations that was created and developed by Apple. It is part of iWork Office programs and the latest version is Keynote 6 in 2015. To be precise, Keynote was used for pre-editing before doing actual editing in iMovie. Firstly, I cut and edited the photos that I needed in Photoshop then the edited photos were imported into Keynote for further editing.

The reason why the photos had to be cut and edited in Photoshop first is because I recreated the images for video through photo collage. For this reason, it was compulsory to cut and edit the photos in Photoshop first. In Keynote I created new images by arranging each collage of photos. Some of the images were be animated by adding movements, effects and transitions. After each separate page was created through Keynote, the pages were exported as a Quick Time Movie file,
such as mp4. The reason for exporting as an mp4 file is that it is easy to import those files into iMovie. The mp4 files that were exported from Keynote and were then edited in detail in iMovie. In addition, various sound effects for each scene of the video, background music for the whole video and diverse types of transitions were added in between each edited scene in iMovie.

Moreover, the final product of the video was exported in iMovie as well. It is true that there is a variety of professional software for video editing, especially for animated films, for example, Aftereffects, Final Cut Pro etc. However, I have used Keynote instead of many other professional video editing software programs. In my honours project in 2009, Keynote was used to create animated films as a part of a mobile travel guide for iPhone and iPod users. Keynote is not professional video editing software, however it provides various options for effects and transitions that allows an editor or a creator to experiment with videos without using professional video editing software.

At the same time, it is not as complex to manipulate as other professional video editing software programs like Aftereffects or Final Cut Pro. Of course, there are several limitations due to the limited range of video editing functions yet still Keynote is a useful program to make videos and photo collages.

Photo Collage

Photo collage is one of the main techniques used for creating the videos for the Digital Pal-let-ter project. Each photo of ajummas, scenery of Seoul in the 1960s and 2015 and other images were cropped and edited in Photoshop in advance before doing the photo collages in Keynote. Those cropped and edited photos were considered components of a bigger image.
The word collage came from the French verb *coller* meaning ‘to glue’ in English. Collage was first devised by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque in 1912. It is one of the art techniques that emphasises the composition, colours and two or three dimensional effects of pictures. In particular, the limitless of the range of choosing materials for photo collage enriches and extends the creativity of artists (Taylor 2004). Collage is not only used in pictures, but in other artforms such as film. For example, in the film *Fast Film* (2003), directed by Virgil Widrich, the collage technique was used throughout the film to emphasise the stories and the aesthetic effect. Collage is a widely used technique and there are many films, music videos and TV commercials which utilise it.

The cut and paste technique of collage is the same between analogue and digital. However, digital collage allows an artist to have limitless opportunities to cut and paste. Duplication is one of the key characteristics of digital media and it enables an artist to keep cutting and pasting images without concern for destroying original copies of the images (Miller 2011). The collage technique was used for the *Digital Ppal-let-ter* project not only to emphasize the contents of the story, but also to enrich the screen composition visually. Through arranging images from photo archives and hand-drawn images in one space, unique images could be created and these compound images create the distinctive atmosphere of *Digital Ppal-let-ter*.

**Mixed Media: hand-drawn images and photos**

For videos in the *Digital Ppal-let-ter* project hand-drawn images and photos were used in combination with each other. Most of the images for a 2015 video were taken with an iPhone 5 in Seoul, Korea from 2014 to 2015. In contrast, the majority of images for a video of before 1960s were hand-drawn images and images taken from photo archives from an Internet database. Locating
photo archives with images of wash places and village women before the 1960s in Korea was very difficult.

Some images of wash places and village women could be found in the Seoul Museum of History (http://eng.museum.seoul.kr/eng/index.do) and National Museum of Korean Contemporary History (http://www.much.go.kr/en/mainen.do). However, I was not able to use those photos for making a video for Digital Ppal-let-ter project due to having difficulty getting copies of the photos. In addition, photos of village women before the 1960s are scarce on the Internet and digital photo archives compared with images of ajummas of today. As far as I know academic research of Korean village women before the 1960s barely exists in photo archives.

I guess it could be because photography equipment during in the 1960s was rare, given that the Korean economy was moribund immediately after the Korean War in 1953. At the same time, it might be conceived that the daily lives of village women was not a very important subject to be captured in photos before the 1960s. For these reasons, it can be surmised that there are not enough photo archives that describe village women’s daily lives and their communal spaces such as wash places.

Therefore, I referred to the photo archives of Seoul Museum of History and National Museum of Korean Contemporary History and visited several times during the period of field research in 2014 and 2015. With images from those photo archives I then drew images of village women for the videos by hand on the computer using Keynote. Most of the background images in the video are archival photos from the Internet or photos taken by myself that were recreated with other cropped and edited images through photo collage. Due to the use of mixed media and the combination of analogue and digital techniques, audiences will recognise how village women of the wash place prior to the 1960s and smart ajummas of Kakao Talk’s group chat rooms in 2015 can coexist together.
In addition, the coexistence of communication of the pre-smartphones era (face-to-face communication) and the smartphone era (digital mobile communication) emphasises why the communal spaces of ajummas are not just twenty-first century phenomena. Rather the communal spaces for middle-aged women in Korea have always been around but we didn’t notice. The video in the Digital Ppal-let-ter project is intended to remind audiences of the existence of middle-aged women’s communal spaces, their distinct ways of communicating and their many roles as our mothers, neighbours, friends and human beings in Korea from the past to the present. Thus, using mixed media of analogue (hand-drawn images) and digital (digital photos) is intended to highlight the key point of Digital Ppal-let-ter project.

Contextualisation of the Creative Process

For Digital Ppal-let-ter project, there are two things that should be discussed in this chapter.

(1) Use of Background Music

Firstly, two songs were used as a background music for this video that are Han River (1952) by Yeon Ok Shim and Ajumma (2006) by Jin Ah Tae. The song Han River compares the joys and sorrows of life to the flow of a river because Han River is Seoul’s lifeline that flows through the middle of city. In 1950s, People often gathered around at the river to do various activities such as chatting and doing the laundry. I realised that this song could help the audiences understand how village women in 1950s to 1960s regarded the wash place as women’s place to release the sorrows and share the happinesses with each other. The other song Ajumma has simple lyrics but I believe that it could encourage ajummas to keep enjoying their lives as ajummas and to be proud of being ajummas. And strangely, it is rare to find songs about ajumma so I had only a few options to choose songs.
(2) Use of Humour, Irony and/or Hyperbole

I use humour, irony and/or hyperbole especially in the 2016 video. While the written thesis (Smart Ajumma) has more academic and theoretical approach to ajummas and their usage of smartphones, the creative project (Digital Ppal-let-ter) depicts ajummas as familiar presences like our mothers and neighbours. By showing ajummas’ iconic hairdo (short permed hair) repeatedly throughout the video, I would like to emphasise how Korean society have gender stereotypes about ajummas. In general, ajummas are treated as a group of middle-aged women rather than being deemed as an individual person. Their same hairstyle in the video is a metaphor to express gender stereotypes towards ajummas.

Also, there is a reason for using humour in the video. For example, one of the scenes which shows a bunch of ajummas wear the similar outdoor clothing when they enjoy mountain-climbing in the video, demonstrates the collective behaviour of ajummas. In some ways, this collective behaviour of ajummas supports how people put ajummas together as a group rather than seeing them as an individual person. However, it also shows how ajummas are enjoying their lives as ajummas with each other in their own ways and avoiding those social biases. I believe that those similar fashion style of ajummas could contribute to the creation of a distinctive identity of ajummas in Korea. To describe ajummas humorously with using hyperbole sometimes in the video shows ajummas are passionate human beings who live a pleasant life in their own way. I also think that their unique identity such as collective behaviour and ajummarous fashion style enables ajummas to be established as a unique group of middle-aged women in the world. I hope audiences see ajummas not as a strange group of middle-aged women but rather understand them as a unique female group of individuals through watching this video.
Another creative project besides the Digital Ppal-let-ter video for my PhD research project is a blog. The blog is titled ‘Smart Ajumma Blog’ and its URL is http://smart-ajumma.com. I have been blogging about the Smart Ajumma research project since 8th December 2015. The blog entries are written in both English and Korean so as to share my research project with various audiences and not limit it to Korean audiences. Blog entries I write for the ‘Smart Ajumma Blog’ are about ajummas from the general to the specific and from the academic to the miscellaneous. Even though the blog and the thesis have the same purpose of sharing a variety of ideas, stories and information about ajummas, the blog is distinguished from the written thesis as it targets the general public who may be interested in Korean culture and ajummas broadly.

In every entry of the blog I include various media such as photos and videos to enhance content understanding. The reason why I chose blogging as a part of my creative project is because it allows me to communicate with audiences interactively without being constrained by time and space. In addition, I expect that this research project is not a one-time project but rather that it can be on-going through blogging regularly even after I submit my research thesis. Traffic for the blog is small at the moment because it is still in the early stages compared with more famous blogs. However, I take a bright view of the smart ajumma blog’s prospects because it provides a digital bridge between ajummas and non-ajummas and Koreans and non-Koreans to help them understand and further redefine who ajummas are through reading my blog entries. Moreover, it is hoped that the audiences will interact and communicate with myself and each other (e.g. make comments) as the blog continues.
Conclusion

There are still various debates about the relationship between technology and women even in the 21st century where new technology is pervasive. Debates about women and technology have existed forever regardless of the kind of technology. However, the most important thing that should concern us today is not the narrow and outdated dichotomous way of thinking about differences between men and women in their use of technology. Rather, it should be subdivided into how the use of technology can be differentiated and characterised according to a particular group of women. For this reason, the group of middle-aged and married women in Korea known as *ajumma* was chosen to investigate how they adopt new technology such as smartphones in their daily lives.

Unlike youth, younger and single female groups of Korea, *ajummas* received scant media and technology companies’ attention. In addition, they have been unnoticed, overlooked and generalised because they are *ajummas*. They have been stereotyped as loud, discourteous, disorderly, shameless and a technological outsider in Korean society. This prejudiced view among the general public might lead to more stereotypes about *ajummas* because we generalise about *ajummas*’ lives rather than looking at them in-depth. For this reason, this thesis attempts to ask who are *ajummas*, how do *ajummas* behave and how do *ajummas* live? However, this thesis is just a beginning that opens a door to the world to inform us of the existence of *ajummas* who have been an underestimated group in the academic research area of digital mobile communication technology in the twenty-first century. *Ajummas* cannot be defined in a single word and it is not easy to translate. For a real understanding of whom *ajummas* are, the broader aspects of the historical, cultural and societal background of Korea should be examined.
Actually, the existence of *ajummas* and their communication style are nothing new. They’ve been living with us and using their own styles of communication in specified communal spaces without being noticed. Through myriad theories and research, this thesis proved that several similarities could be found between two disconnected middle-aged women’s communal spaces that are located in different eras. Furthermore, the communication style among *ajummas* will keep evolving along with the development of new mobile communication technology.

Today’s *ajummas* should be considered an emerging middle-aged, female group in the research area of new mobile communication technology. They show distinctive characteristics in their use of smartphones through this research and it should be necessary to reconsider *ajummas* as another important group of the smartphone market in Korea. The research project of *Smart Ajumma* attempts to unveil who *ajummas* are and how they engage with smartphones in their daily lives through an academic approach. At the same time, *Digital Ppal-let-ter* was produced as a video and this creative project was a response to the research question with regard to the *Smart Ajumma* research project.

In reality, there is no *Digital Ppal-let-ter*, because it is an imaginary communal space for *ajummas* that was created by my own interpretation through the *Smart Ajumma* research project. I assume that there are mobile communal places for *ajummas* like *Digital Ppal-let-ter* but we don’t notice them yet. *Digital Ppal-let-ter* is a twenty-first century version of a wash place to engage in face-to-face communication. Similar to the *Ppal-let-ter* of the past, *Digital Ppal-let-ter* is a communal space for maintaining relationships with each other as village women used to. Only the ways of communicating have changed, adapting to wider technological developments. Thus, *Digital Ppal-let-ter* in 2015 is an evolved version of the previous wash place in the time before the 1960s. At the same time, these two different spaces are not separate, rather they are linked closely to each other.
A study of Korean *ajummas* and their everyday practices of adopting new digital mobile technology is more than fascinating. This study applied an interdisciplinary approach of media studies, East Asian studies, Korean studies and feminism studies to cover the relationship between *ajummas* and their smartphone use. Even though contemporary *ajummas* are neither early adopters nor explorers of new digital mobile technology in Korea compared with other youth groups (Ok 2011), they actively participate in new media practices. The usage of smartphones among *ajummas* is still like a toddler’s first few halting steps. However, *ajummas* demonstrate their own characteristic ways of engaging mobile communication in the distinctive communal spaces they create. The most prominent point revealed by this research is that *ajummas* already participate in digital mobile communication and this has not yet been considered or explored by scholars and researchers. According to the increase of *ajumma* smartphone users, it has a great ripple effect and will create more opportunities or applications that enable them to enrich and enjoy their daily lives.

All of us are living in this era of new digital mobile technology. Korea ranks the highest in terms of smartphone users in the world. With smartphones, people are able to do almost everything in everyday practices in Korea, regardless of age and gender. *Ajummas* are not an exception. *Ajummas* will not disappear and all young single women are reserved-*ajumma* in the future, as am I. Although *ajummas* are still considered a minor group of females in the new mobile digital technology market, they should be reconsidered as an integral and important group of people in Korea.

*Ajummas* made contributions to Korean economic development through overcoming various hardships in Korean history. They are mothers, wives, friends, women and human beings before they became *ajummas*. *Ajummas* have been considered as ordinary, loud, rude, meddlesome and non-tech savvy middle-aged and married women. This biased perception of them leads people to overlook the potential group of *ajummas* in this smartphone era. *Ajummas* are ordinary middle-aged
and married women in Korea but they are not ordinary when we look at them closely. They are not just *ajummas* any more. They have become *Smart Ajummas*, enjoying *ajummarous* lives in their *Digital Ppal-let-ter*. They well deserve to be called *Smart Ajummas*. 
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Creative Project

There are two creative projects for this research project.

1. Video Project (*Digital Ppal-let-ter*)

   YouTube: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B_fi0uXgvyk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B_fi0uXgvyk)

   Vimeo: [https://vimeo.com/157381511](https://vimeo.com/157381511)

2. Research Blog (Smart Ajumma)

   [http://smart-ajumma.com](http://smart-ajumma.com)
Plain Language Statement for Persons Participating in Research Projects Involving Interviews, Questionnaires, Focus Groups or Disclosure of Personal Information

SMART AJUMMA

Student Researcher details:
Name: Jung Youn Moon VCA / Centre For Ideas – Student Researcher
Email: jungm@student.unimelb.edu.au

Project details: This research project is part of a PhD research project at the Centre For Ideas.

You are invited to participate in this project, which is being conducted by Ms Jung Youn Moon of the Faculty of the VCA & MCM at The University of Melbourne. This project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee.

The Ajumma, which translates to married woman/older woman/mother, plays an important role in contemporary South Korean identity. Located often in the background, the ajumma is seen as the organizer of families, husbands and children. And yet she is often shunned in a culture obsessed with youth. This thesis seeks to explore the ignored and yet fundamental role the ajumma plays in contemporary South Korean media cultures. By drawing on media, domestication, and science and technology studies (STS), along with ethnographic fieldwork, this thesis will provide a conceptual framework for understanding the ajumma as a powerful engine in the mechanics of South Korean media and technology cultures today.

The topic of ajumma and mobile phone is an unprecedented area of research. As noted above, the ajumma and her new media usage has been relatively overlooked, despite the fact that she is increasingly one of the
main consumers. This study hopes to benefit gender and technology debates both inside and outside South Korea.

To explore perceptions and practices of mobile social media by South Korean women (age 30-60). Through questionnaires (with 100 participants) and interviews (with 30-50 participants), this study will investigate the realities of women’s new media usage in South Korea. This research project will be the combination of a half written thesis and a creative project.

What will I be asked to do?

The participants will do a questionnaire (via email or URL link for online survey, for 15 minutes) and will have the option to also participate in a focus group session (approximately 1 hour). The interview will be self-directed to allow participants to lead the nature of the questions and their inquiry. The investigator will have a variety of concepts like “ajumma and new media” or “representations of the ajumma and the smartphone” which they will then ask the participants to respond to.

Should you agree to participate, you would be asked to contribute in the following ways:

· First, a short questionnaire (approximately 15 minutes)
· Second, a focus group discussion (approximately an hour)
· Third, taking photographs of screenshot of your smartphones, your self-portrait by your smartphones and your usage of smartphones.
· Fourth, video or audio recording during the focus group discussion for making an accurate record of what you are saying.

· You have the option of participating in one or two parts of the research (questionnaire and focus group). You don’t have to participate all of these two parts of the research. It is your choice to participate or not participate in the project. In addition, it is your choice to take or not take photographs of screenshot of your smartphones, your self-portrait by your smartphones and your usage of smartphones by a researcher’s smartphone.

The Questionnaire (100 participants)

The questionnaire consists of the three sections with approximately 22 questions. This questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. There are not foreseen risks associated with your participation in this research project. Additionally, you should read through this plain language statement before proceeding with your questionnaire. This will give you time to evaluate whether or not you wish to
participate in this study. There are no penalties if you decide not to participate in the follow-up interview and focus group session.

The Focus Group (3 to 5 group of 5 (i.e. 15-25 participants))

The focus group discussion will take approximately one hour. You will be greeted with other participants on a first name basis only, to protect privacy. Additionally, the discussion will focus only on usage of smartphones and practice with no personal information to be discussed.

With your permission, the interview would be tape-recorded so that we can ensure that we make an accurate record of what you say. When the tape has been transcribed, you would be provided with a copy of the transcript, so that you can verify that the information is correct and/or request deletions.

Photographs

Photographs will be need for the photo collage a part of the creative project at the end. You will be asked to take screenshots of your smartphones, self-portraits of yourself by your smartphones and usage of your smartphones by a researcher’s smartphone. The photographs you provide will be used for photo collage. Thus, your entire face of self-portraits will not be recognised by others. Additionally, no personal information will be presented in the photographs. When the photo collage has been created, you would be provided with a copy of the photo collage, so that you can verify the works.

Your involvement in the project is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw your contributions at any time.

How long is my contribution expected to take?

The questionnaire should only take 15 minutes. We estimate that the time commitment required of you would be approximately one hour each for focus group session. The total time commitment is approximately one hour and 15 minutes.

How will any potential risks be minimised?

The risks involved in this project are envisaged to be minimal. Subject to the limitations of the law, all information you provide will remain confidential. Information gathered in the questionnaire, records of interviews, focus group and photographs will be kept in password protected computers, and will only be viewed by the researcher. All published work that reports on the research will use pseudonyms to disguise the identity of the participants; however it is possible that people who know you well may be able to identify you from contextual information. This research is for a PhD thesis and a creative project.
Will I be able to be identified as a participant in this project?

You have been selected to participate in this project due to your particular expertise / standing in the field / professional experience. We would like to seek your permission to use your name in the final works arising from this project. If for any reason you choose not to be named, we would refer to you by a pseudonym, and remove any contextual details that might reveal your identity. We would protect your anonymity to the fullest possible extent within the limits of the law and any records of your contribution will be kept on the Student Researcher’s password protected computer. You should note, however, that since the number of potential participants is small, it might still be possible for someone to identify you.

What about confidentiality?

Subject to the limitations of the law, all information you provide will remain confidential. Information gathered in the questionnaire, records of interview and photographs will be kept in password protected computers, and will only be viewed and accessed by named researchers only to protect the confidentiality of data that you provide. There are legal limits to data confidentiality. It is possible for data to be subject to subpoena, freedom of information request or mandated reporting by some professions.

What happens to my contributions after the project has finished?

Materials collected during this study will be retained for a minimum of five years in accordance with indefinitely by the Student Researcher, Jung Youn Moon. Information gathered in the questionnaire, records of interview and photographs will be kept in password protected computers, and will only be viewed and accessed by named researchers only to protect the confidentiality of data that you provide.

What if I have concerns?

If you have any questions or concerns, or would like further information about the research project, please contact the researchers. Contact details are listed at the start of this Plain Language Statement.

If you are concerned about the conduct of the project, please contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, The University of Melbourne, ph: 8344 2073. (Melbourne, Australia)

Local Supervisor, Professor, Jung Im Ahn, Faculty of Media Studies, Seoul Women’s University, ph: 82-2-970-5582. (Seoul, South Korea)

What about methodology?

Plain Language Statement and Consent form will be sent via participants’ email or will provide URL link for the online survey. Once you read and sign on the Plain Language Statement and Consent form, you can either scan these documents and send to the researcher (Jung Youn Moon, jungm@student.unimelb.edu.au) via email or send hard copies of these documents via mail.
What happens next?

Thank you for considering this invitation to participate in our research project. If you do decide to participate, one of the researchers will provide you with a consent form. Please indicate that you have read and understood this information by signing the accompanying consent form and returning it to one of the researchers. Whether or not you decide to participate, this Plain Language Statement is yours to keep.
피험자 모집문건 및 연구계획 요약본 (설문지, 포커스그룹 인터뷰, 개인정보에 관한 내용 포함)

스마트 아줌마

학생 연구자
이름: 문정연 VCA / Centre For Ideas - Student Researcher
이메일: jungm@student.unimelb.edu.au

프로젝트에 관하여: 이 연구는 멜번대학교의 VCA & MCM, Center For Ideas PhD 학생인 문정연 학생의 박사논문 연구의 일환입니다. 이 연구는 인간 윤리 리서치 위원회의 심의를 통과한 것임을 알려드립니다.

이 연구의 궁극적인 목적은, 현재의 대한민국에서 그동안 등화시 되었던 ‘아줌마’의 역할이 사회적, 문화적, 그리고 다양한 미디어(예 소셜 미디어)를 통해서 어떻게 나타나고 있는지를 알아보고자 하는 것입니다. 이 연구를 통하여 ‘아줌마’들이 대한민국의 미디어와 테크놀로지 그리고 커뮤니티의 형성에 어떠한 영향을 주고 있는지도 함께 알아볼 계획입니다.

아줌마, 혼히 결혼한 여자/염마로 정의되고 있고, 대한민국 사회와 가정에서 폐놓을 수 없는 중요한 존재로 자리매김 하고 있습니다. 하지만 대부분의 대한민국의 테크놀로지와 여성 그리고 문화에 관한 연구는 아줌마를 제외한, 특히 청소년 혹은 20-30대에 중점을 두고 있었습니. 따라서 이 연구를 통해서, 아줌마들이 테크놀로지와 문화적 연구에서 폐놓을 수 없는 중요한 타겟으로 자리잡고 있고, 아줌마 그룹이 외 대한민국과 세계의 여성과 테크놀로지에 관한 연구에서 간과해서는 안되는지에 대한 것을 보여 줄 것입니다.

이번 연구를 위해, 약 50-100명의 설문지 응답자와 약 15-25명의 포커스그룹 인터뷰 응답자가 연구에 참여할 것입니다. 이번 연구는 학술 논문과 창의적인 프로젝트가 함께 이루어진 박사논문으로 보여질 것입니다.
참여자들이 하게 될 것은 무엇일까요?

1. 설문지 응답 (15분 소요 예정, 100명, 이메일로 가능)

2. 포커스 그룹 토론 (1시간 소요 예정, 5명씩 3개-5개 조로 나누어 진행, 설문지 응답자 중에서 개별연락을 통해서 이루어 질 것임)

3. 사전활동 (응답자의_hand폰 스크린샷, 응답자의 셀프카메라 혹은 핸드폰 사용하는 모습이 담긴 사진)

4. 포커스 그룹 토론 중 비디오나 오디오 녹음이 있을 예정임 (토론 내용의 정확한 기록을 위하여)

설문지 응답 (100명)

22개의 질문으로 이루어진 설문지에 응답해주시면 됩니다. 15분 정도가 소요될 예정입니다. 설문지에 응답하기 전에 피험자 모집문건 및 연구계획 요약본을 반드시 읽어주시기 바랍니다.

포커스그룹 토론 (5명씩 3개 조-5개 조, 15-25명)

포커스그룹 토론은 1시간 정도가 소요될 예정입니다. 포커스그룹 토론에서는 참여자의 개인정보에 대한 보안이 철저하게 이루어질 것입니다. 토론은 스마트폰, 핸드폰 사용에 대한 개인적인 경험에 관한 이야기가 추가 될 것입니다. 비디오나 오디오 녹음은 참여자의 동의하에 이루어 질 것입니다. 녹음된 테잎에 관한 내용은 받아보실 수 있으며, 언제든지 수정 혹은 삭제를 요청할 수 있습니다.

사전활동

창의적 프로젝트의 한 부분인 사전클러즈를 위해 참가자들의 사진이 필요합니다. (스마트폰, 핸드폰 배경사진, 셀프카메라, 평소에 스마트폰, 핸드폰을 사용하는 모습 등)

사전클러즈로 이용될 것이기 때문에, 얼굴 전체가 사용될 일은 없을 것입니다. 또한, 사전클러즈가 완성된 후, 참가자들은 수정을 요청할 수 있습니다. (얼굴 전체가 사용된 경우)

이번 연구 참여는 자발적으로 이루어지는 것입니다. 연구 참여 중에 그만두고 싶을 경우, 언제든지 연구 참여를 그만둘 수 있습니다.
위험 부담은?

이 연구는 최소한의 위험 (minimal risks)을 동반한 연구입니다. 모든 연구 참여자들의 개인정보와 응답 내용은 절대로 유출되지 않을것임을 약속합니다. 모든 문서와 녹음내용은 비밀번호로 잠겨있는 컴퓨터에 저장될 것이며, 이 컴퓨터는 연구자, 문정연 이외에는 아무도 접근하지 못할 것입니다. 연구논문과 창의적인 프로젝트 결과물을 통해 이 연구 참가자의 개인정보를 알아낼 수 있는 방법은 전혀 없을것입니다.

개인정보 유출에 관한 문제는?

만약, 논문이나 프로젝트의 참여자의 이름이 필요할 경우, 반드시 참여자의 의사를 묻어 불 것임입니다. 대부분의 경우, 참여자의 개인신상에 관한것은 기재하지 않을것입니다. 참여자의 익명성을 항상 염두에 두고 연구를 진행할 것입니다. 위에서 언급했다시피, 모든 연구기록은 비밀번호로 잠겨있는 컴퓨터에 저장될 것이며, 오직 연구자 문정연만 접근 가능할 것입니다.

기밀에 대한 부분은?

설문지, 인터뷰내용, 포커스그룹 토토내용은 모두 기밀로 다루어 질 것입니다. 위에서 언급했다시피, 모든 연구기록은 비밀번호로 잠겨있는 컴퓨터에 저장될 것이며, 오직 연구자 문정연만 접근 가능할 것입니다.

프로젝트, 연구논문이 끝난후에는 어떻게 되나요?

이 연구를 위해 모아진 응답자들의 답변들은 학생연구원에게 최소 5년동안 보관될 것입니다. 그리고 학생연구자와 오직 허락된 연구원만 이 데이터를 볼 수 있습니다.

질문이나 문제점이 발생하면?

만약, 연구에 대한 질문이나 문제점이 발생했을 경우, 언제든지 학생연구원에게 연락하십시오. 이 문서 제일 왼부분에 명시되어 있는 학생연구원 연락처로 연락하면 됩니다. 이 연구에 대한 또 다른 궁금점이 있을경우,

Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, The University of Melbourne, 전화번호: +61-3-8344-2073 (앨번, 호주)

대한민국 현지 수퍼바이저, 교수 안정임, 언론영상학부, 서울여자대학교, 전화번호: 02-970-5582 (서울, 대한민국)

설문지를 어디로 보내면 되나요?

피험자 모집문건 및 연구계획 요약본과 연구참여 동의서를 참여자의 이메일로 보내드립니다. 또는, 참여자들의 편의를 위해 온라인 서베이 웹페이지의 URL 링크를 알려드리겠습니다. 이메일을 받고, 피험자 모집문건 및 연구계획 요약본과 연구참여 동의서를 읽고자 하는 사람을 한 뒤에, 학생연구원의 문정연의 이메일로 다시 보내주시면 됩니다. (jungm@student.unimelb.edu.au)
이번 연구에 관심 가져주셔서 대단히 감사합니다. 만약 연구에 참여할 의향이 있으시면 연구참여 동의서를 보내드리겠습니다. 연구참여에 동의하시기 전에, 반드시 피험자 모집문건 및 연구계획 요약본을 꼼꼼히 읽어보신 후에 연구참여 동의서와 함께 학생연구원 문장연에게 보내주시면 대단히 감사하겠습니다.
Consent Form for Persons Participating in Research Projects Involving Interviews, Questionnaires, Focus Groups or Disclosure of Personal Information

SMART AJUMMA

Researcher’s names: Jung Youn Moon

1. I consent to participate in this project, the details of which have been explained to me, and I have been provided with a written plain language statement to keep;

2. I understand that after I sign and return this consent form it will be retained by the student researcher;

3. I understand that my participation in this research project will involve:
   a. Being interviewed about ajumma and the usage of smartphones;
   b. Taking photographs of the usage of smartphones.

4. I agree that the researchers may use my contributions as described in the plain language statement.

I acknowledge that I have been informed that:

5. This project is for the purposes of research;

6. The possible effects of participating in the research project have been explained to my satisfaction;
7. I am free to withdraw any of my contributions to the project at any time;

8. The confidentiality of any personal information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements;

I understand that my contributions to this project will appear in the Student Researcher’s dissertation □

yes □ no

In any work arising from this research project such as the Student Researcher’s dissertation, I would like to:

Be identified with my name □ yes □ no

Be referred to by a pseudonym □ yes □ no

Remain anonymous as far as this is possible □ yes □ no

I understand that as the sample size is small, anonymity cannot be guaranteed □

yes □ no

I wish to receive a copy of the Student Researcher’s dissertation □

yes □ no

I consent to my contribution to the project being audio-taped / video-taped □

yes □ no

I consent to the outcomes of this research being published in other forms such as articles or websites □

yes □ no

I wish to be invited to any public performance or exhibition of work emerging from this project
□ yes  □ no

Name of participant: ____________________________________________________________

Participant signature: ____________________________________ Date: ____________________
Consent Form for Persons Participating in Research Projects Involving Interviews, Questionnaires, Focus Groups or Disclosure of Personal Information

SMART AJUMMA

이번 설문지 응답에 관한 ‘동의서’입니다. 내용은 주로, 이 설문에 응답한 내용이 위 학생(문정연)의 연구에 쓰여지는 것에 ‘동의함’을 문서로 남기기 위한 것입니다. 감사합니다.

Researcher’s names: Jung Youn Moon

1. I consent to participate in this project, the details of which have been explained to me, and I have been provided with a written plain language statement to keep;

2. I understand that after I sign and return this consent form it will be retained by the student researcher;

3. I understand that my participation in this research project will involve:
   a. Being interviewed about ajumma and the usage of smartphones;
   b. Taking photographs of the usage of smartphones.

4. I agree that the researchers may use my contributions as described in the plain language statement.

I acknowledge that I have been informed that:

5. This project is for the purposes of research;
6. The possible effects of participating in the research project have been explained to my satisfaction;

7. I am free to withdraw any of my contributions to the project at any time;

8. The confidentiality of any personal information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements;

Please tick: (아래에 있는 항목에 표시를 해주시면 됩니다. 이번 설문조사에서는 ‘사진촬영’등의 항목 에는 해당사항이 없습니다)

I understand that my contributions to this project will appear in the Student Researcher’s dissertation □ yes □ no

위 학생의 리서치프로젝트에 내가 답한 설문지의 내용이 사용될 것에 대해 알고 있습니다.

In any work arising from this research project such as the Student Researcher’s dissertation, I would like to:

Be identified with my name □ yes □ no

Be referred to by a pseudonym □ yes □ no

Remain anonymous as far as this is possible □ yes □ no

이번 리서치프로젝트(학생의 논문 및 아트웍)에 내가 대답한 설문응답의 내용이,

(1)내 이름이 사용될 바란다.

(2)가명이 사용될 바란다.

(3)익명으로 사용될 바란다.

I understand that as the sample size is small, anonymity cannot be guaranteed □ yes □ no

I wish to receive a copy of the Student Researcher’s dissertation
논문의 복사본을 받아보고 싶다.

I consent to my contribution to the project being audio-taped / video-taped

이 항목은 설문지에는 해당이 없으니 빈칸으로 남겨두시면 됩니다.

I consent to the outcomes of this research being published in other forms such as articles or websites

설문에 응답한 내용이 글 (논문, 책 등)이나 웹사이트에 출판되는것을 동의하는 바입니다.

I wish to be invited to any public performance or exhibition of work emerging from this project

Name of participant:

참여자의 성명

Participant signature: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

참여자의 싸인과 날짜
APPENDIX C

Smart Ajumma

Questionnaire

This questionnaire will be distributed to Korean women over thirty years old living in South Korea. The findings will be used as part of a PhD thesis exploring changing images and representations of women and media in South Korea.

1. Do you define yourself as an ajumma?
   No
   Yes (go to question 2)

2. Do you own a smartphone?
   No (go to question 1-1) Yes. If so, which one and for how long? __________

2-1. Could you please explain why you don't use a smartphone?

________________________________________________________________________

2-2. Do you have any problems or difficulties of 'smartphoneless' life? If so, please describe one of examples of problems or difficulties.
2-3. Are you planning to buy a smartphone in the future? If so, please explain the reason why you are willing to buy it.

SMARTPHONES

3. Do you use a smartphone everyday?
   No   Yes. If so, what do you do the most? ________

4. Did you notice that your communication practices changed when you acquired a smartphone? If so, please circle the relevant options below:
   A. More communication with your family
   B. More communication with friends
   C. More meetings are formed than before having a smartphone
   D. Other (please identify) ____________

5. Do you take photos or videos with a smartphone?
   No   Yes. If so, do you take more photos or videos? Why?

6. What is your favourite application from your smartphone? Why?
7. What is your least favourite smartphone application? Why?

8. What is your smartphone’s wallpaper? Why?

9. What is your smartphone’s case? Why?

SOCIAL MEDIA

10. What social media do you use? (please circle)
   KaKao Talk    KaKao Story    Facebook    Other__________

11. Why do you use social media?

   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
12. What mobile games do you play?
   Anipang       I love Coffee       Other (please name) ____________________

13. What motivates you to play these game and where?

   ______________________________________________________________

14. Do you blog?
   No (go to question )
   Yes. If so, why do you do blogging and what do you do the most?

   ______________________________________________________________

15. Do you have friends whom have met through blogging? If so, please describe how you
   have met your blogger friends

   ______________________________________________________________

16. Do you have regular meeting with blogger friends? If so, what is the main reason to
   gather together?

   ______________________________________________________________

17. Did you notice that your communication practices changed when you start blogging? If
   so, please circle the relevant options below:
A. More communication with your family
B. More communication with friends
C. More meetings are formed than before blogging
D. Other (please identify) ____________

18. Do you think why the number of ajumma bloggers are increasing continuously?

________________________________________________________________________

PERCEPTIONS OF THE AJUMMA AND MEDIA

19. Personally, how do you define an ajumma?

________________________________________________________________________

20. What are some of the images of ajumma in Korean society? Can you please provide one example of a negative and positive example?

________________________________________________________________________

21. Do you think contemporary Korean smartphone market (includes function and design of handset and apps) satisfies ajummas desire’s of using smartphones?

________________________________________________________________________
22. How do you see the relationship between ajummas and new media in South Korea?

Many thanks for your time and thoughtful reflections.
스마트 아줌마 설문지

이 설문은, 나이 40-65, 기혼, 자녀가 있고 서울에 거주하는 대한민국 여성을 대상으로 하는 설문입니다. 이 설문의 목적은 대한민국의 여성, 특히 아줌마와 미디어가 어떠한 관계와 사회적 현상을 보여주고 있는지를 알아보기 위한 PhD 연구 논문을 위한 것입니다.

1. 당신은 당신을 아줌마라고 생각하십니까?

아니오 이 설문의 목적이 당신을 아줌마라고 생각하지 않는 당신을 포함하기 위함입니다.

예 (2번 질문으로)

2. 스마트폰을 가지고 계십니까?

아니오 (2-1번 질문으로)

예, 그렇다면 어떠한 기종을 사용하며 얼마나 사용하고 계십니까?

2-1. 스마트폰을 사용하지 않는 이유는 무엇입니까? 구체적으로 설명해주세요.
2-2. 스마트폰이 없는 생활에 불편함은 없습니까? 그렇다면, 예를 들어 설명해주세요.

2-3. 스마트폰을 구입할 예정이십니까? 그렇다면, 이유는?

스마트폰

3. 스마트폰을 매일 사용하십니까?

아니오

예, 그렇다면 가장 많이 이용하는 것은?
4. 스마트폰을 사용한 후 커뮤니케이션에 어떠한 변화가 왔습니까?
A. 가족과의 더 많은 커뮤니케이션
B. 친구와의 더 많은 커뮤니케이션
C. 스마트폰을 사용하기 전보다 더 많은 모임이 생겼다
D. 기타 (간단하게 써주십시오)

5. 스마트폰으로 사진이나 비디오를 촬영합니까?

아니오
예, 그렇다면 사진과 비디오 중 어떤 것을 더 자주 써십니까? 간단하게 이유를 설명해 주십시오.

6. 스마트폰에서 가장 좋아하는 어플리케이션은? 이유는?

7. 스마트폰에서 가장 적게 사용하는 어플리케이션은? 이유는?
8. 당신의 현재 스마트폰 배경화면은 무엇입니까? 이유는?

9. 당신의 현재 스마트폰 케이스는 무엇입니까? 이유는?

소셜미디어

10. 어떤 소셜미디어를 사용하십니까? (사용하는 것 모두 동그라미 쳐주십시오)

카카오톡  카카오스토리  페이스북  트위터  네이버 밴드  기타 (이름을 적어주세요)

11. 소셜미디어를 사용하는 목적은?
12. 어떤 모바일 게임을 주로 하십니까?

애니팡  애니팡 2  아이러브커피  와라 편의점  기타 (이름을 적어주세요)

13. 블로그를 운영하십니까?

아니오 (18번 질문으로)

예, 그렇다면 하는 이유와 블로그를 통해서 무엇을 하는지 간단히 설명해 주십시오.


15. 블로거 친구들과 정기적인 모임을 갖습니까? 그렇다면 모임의 주된 목적은 무엇입니까?
17. 블로그를 운영하면서부터 당신의 커뮤니케이션 방식에 어떠한 변화가 찾아왔습니까?
그렇다면, 아래의 보기 중에서 관련된 답을 동그라미 찍주십시오.

A. 가족과의 더 많은 커뮤니케이션
B. 친구들과의 더 많은 커뮤니케이션
C. 블로깅을 하기전보다 더 많은 모임이 생기고 참여하게 되었다
D. 기타 (간단히 설명해 주십시오)

18. 왜 아줌마 블로거들이 점점 더 늘어난다고 생각하십니까?

아줌마와 미디어

19. 개인적으로 아줌마를 어떻게 정의 내리시겠습니까?
20. 한국사회에서 아줌마의 이미지는 어떻게니까? (간단하게 주관적인 생각으로) 긍정적인 면과 부정적인 면을 나누어서 간단히 설명해주세요.

21. 본인이 생각하기에, 현재 스마트폰이 아줌마의 구미에 맞게 디자인되었다고 생각합니까?
   (기능, 디자인, 어플리케이션등)

22. 한국에서의 아줌마와 뉴미디어 (스마트폰, 인터넷, 블로깅, 모바일게임등)의 관계를 어떻게 생각하십니까?
설문에 응답해 주셔서 매우 감사합니다. 참여해 주신 분의 답변은 연구에 큰 도움이 될 것입니다.
Smart Ajumma

Focus Group Interview Questions

SMARTPHONE

1. What is smartphone to you?

2. Did you notice that your communication practices changed when you acquired a smartphone? If so, please describe how they are changed with specific examples.

SOCIAL MEDIA

3. Do you use social media and why do you use them? (e.g. blogging, Kakao talk (instant messaging network which is similar to MSN online chatting, but Kakao talk is for smartphone so users can send messages or photos through their smartphones). Please give specific names of social media you use and describe why and how you use them.

4. Did you notice that your communication practices changed when you use social media? For example, do you have more opportunities to get to know various people or friends than before using social media? Or do you have more meeting to attend than before using social media? How about family relationship? How social media changes your communication practices?

AJUMMA

5. Do you think you are ajumma? If so, please explain why you are ajumma with a specific example.

6. Are you happy to be an ajumma or not?

7. There is no special term as ajumma in other countries. Do you think what is ajumma in South Korea? Is ajumma a mother, wife, married women or what else can you describe ajumma? Do you think how ajumma are treated or concerned in Korean society?
8. Do you notice any differences of using new technology such as smartphone between single women and ajumma? If so, please describe with specific examples and why is that?

9. If you are a developer or designer of smartphones, how can you design or develop your smartphone handset or applications for ajumma?
10. Do you enjoy living as ajumma in Korea? If so, why and how do you enjoy your life as ajumma? If not, why you don’t enjoy your life as ajumma?

**Community**

11. Do you have any communities where you are involved in? (online/offline) Could you please describe about communities you are involved in?

12. Does smartphone affects when you do or choose the community activities? If so, how is that?

13. How do you see the future of communities of Ajumma in Korea?

*Many thanks for your time and thoughtful reflections.*
스마트 아줌마

포커스 그룹 인터뷰 질문지

스마트폰

1. 당신에게 스마트폰이란?

2. 스마트폰을 사용한 후에 커뮤니케이션 방식에 어떠한 변화가 생겼습니까? 특별한 예를 들어 자세하게 설명해 주세요.

소셜미디어

3. 소셜미디어를 사용합니까? 왜 사용합니까? (블로그, 카카오톡, 카카오스토리, 페이스북 기타등등) 어때서 사용하는지 그리고 왜 사용하는지 특별한 예를 들어 자세히 설명해 주세요.

4. 소셜미디어를 사용함으로써 커뮤니케이션 방식에 어떠한 변화가 생겼습니까? 예를 들어, 소셜미디어를 사용함에 전보다 더 많은 사람들을 알게 되었다든지, 혹은 더 많은 모임이 생기고 참여하게 되었는지? 가족과의 친밀도는 어떠한 변화가 생겼습니까?
아줌마

5. 당신이 아줌마라고 생각합니까? 이유는?

6. 아줌마로서의 삶이 행복합니까? 이유는?


8. 아줌마와 결혼하지 않은 싱글 여성 사이에 스마트폰과 같은 뉴테크놀로지를 사용하는 혹은 대하는 방식이 다른점이 있다고 생각합니까? 그렇다면 예를 들어 설명해주세요.

9. 당신이 만약, 스마트폰 개발자 혹은 디자이너라면 아줌마 만을 위해서 어떻게 스마트폰을 디자인하고 어떠한 종류의 어플리케이션을 만들고 싶습니까?

10. 한국에서 아줌마로 사는걸 즐기고 계십니까? 그렇다면 어떻게 그리고 왜 아줌마로 사는게 즐거운지 설명해주세요. 만약 즐기지 않다면, 즐기지 않은 이유도 설명해 주세요.

커뮤니티

11. 속해있는 커뮤니티 혹은 단체가 있습니까? (온라인/오프라인) 그 커뮤니티나 단체에 대해서 설명해 주세요.

12. 커뮤니티나 단체를 선택할때 스마트폰이 영향을 끼쳤습니까? 그렇다면 왜 그렇게합니까?

13. 앞으로 대한민국에서 아줌마의 커뮤니티 혹은 단체가 어떻게 될 것이라고 전망합니까?
참여해 주셔서 매우 감사합니다.