LATINO MUSLIMS COMMUNITIES

ONLINE PRESENCE: SENSE OF VIRTUAL COMMUNITY

IN FACEBOOK SPACES

Master's Thesis

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Eskisehir, 2016

LATINO MUSLIMS COMMUNITIES ONLINE PRESENCE: SENSE OF VIRTUAL COMMUNITY IN FACEBOOK SPACES

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MASTER'S THESIS

Master in Public Relations and Advertising

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Mesude Canan ÖZTÜRK

Eskisehir

Anadolu University, Institute of Social Sciences

October 2016

JÜRİ VE ENSTİTÜ ONAYI

Diana Carolina ZUÑIGA GOMEZ'in "Latino Muslims Communities Online Presence: Sense of Virtual Community in Facebook Spaces" başlıklı tezi **07 Ekim 2016** tarihinde, aşağıdaki jüri tarafından Lisansüstü Eğitim Öğretim ve Sınav Yönetmeliğinin ilgili maddeleri uyarınca toplanan **Halkla İlişkiler ve Reklamcılık** Anabilim Dalında, **yüksek lisans tezi** olarak değerlendirilerek kabul edilmiştir.

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ABSTRACT

LATINO MUSLIMS COMMUNITIES ONLINE PRESENCE: SENSE OF VIRTUAL COMMUNITY IN FACEBOOK SPACES

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In the first part of the thesis the introduction of the research is presented. In the second chapter can be found the literature review; how religion appears in the Internet, both as information source and experience, the first stages of Islam in Internet, it is also described making emphasis in its deferent forms and finally it focused in what are virtual communities and their characteristics. Chapter three displays the methodology of this work. In chapter four, ten Latino Muslim communities spaces in Facebook are analyzed observing the Sense of Virtual Community, discussion structure and practices, authority and hierarchy, and the broader connections with other (e-) communities. Finally in the chapter five findings, discussion and conclusion are given.

Keywords: Latino Muslims, Communities online, Muslim communities, Islam in Latin America.

ÖZET

LATİN MÜSLÜMAN TOPLULUKLARININ ONLİNE VARLIĞI: FACEBOOK MEKANLARINDA SANAL TOPLULUK AİDİYETİ

Diana Carolina ZUÑIGA GÖMEZ

Halkla İlişkiler ve Reklamcılık Yüksek Lisans

Anadolu Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Ekim, 2016

Danışman: Prof. Dr. Mesude Canan ÖZTÜRK

Bu çalışmada tezin ilk bölümünde araştırmaya ilişkin giriş bilgileri sunulmakta olup, ikinci bölüm alanyazını; dinin Internet ortamlarında bir bilgi ve tecrübe olarak nasıl göründüğüne dairdir, İslam'ın internetteki ilk dönem varlığı hakkında olması yanında farklı formlarda görüntülerini tartışmaktadır ve sonunda sanal toplulukların ne olduğu ve karakteristiklerine yoğunlaşmaktadır. Üçüncü bölüm bu çalışmanın metodolojisini göstermek ve dördüncü bölüm ise on Latin Müslüman topluluğunun Facebook ortamlarındaki varlığını Sanal Topluluk Aidiyeti, ajandaları ve içeriği, otorite ve hiyerarşik durumu, ve diğer online topluluklarla geniş anlamda bağlantıları analiz edilmektedir. Son olarak beşinci bölümde bulgular yanında ve konuya ilişkin tartışma ve sonuçlara yer verilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Latin Müslümanları, online topluluklar, Müslüman topluluklar, Latin Amerika'da İslam

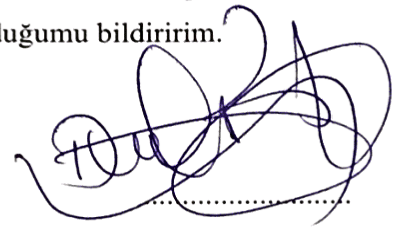
PREFACE

The main purpose of this study to contribute to the Latino Muslims in their development as communities. I would like to thank first at all, to Turkiye Burslari that gave me such a wonderful opportunity not only to study but also to live in Turkey. To my advisor Mesude Canan Özturk who was unconditional despite the troubles and to my friend Halima Manarova who supported me during the program. I feel very thankful with all the organizations and leaders who help me to find the communities and spaces, especially to Moserrat Pimentel, Karla Frida Gonzales, Amal Longhi, Vanessa Davila and Juan Suquillo. Besides I want to thank to my beloved husband Mehmet Ozkan and to my dear parents Perla Sofia Gomez and Diego Zuñiga who always support me and encourage me to achieve my goals. Lastly I want to say thank you to my friends that bear with me.

ETİK İLKE VE KURALLARA UYGUNLUK BEYANNAMESİ

7/10/2016

Bu tezin bana ait, özgün bir çalışma olduğunu; çalışmamın hazırlık, veri toplama, analiz ve bilgilerin sunumu olmak üzere tüm aşamalardan bilimsel etik ilke ve kurallara uygun davrandığımı; bu çalışma kapsamında elde edilemeyen tüm veri ve bilgiler için kaynak gösterdiğimi ve bu kaynaklara kaynakçada yer verdiğimi; bu çalışmanın Anadolu Üniversitesi tarafından kullanılan "bilimsel intihal tespit programı"yla tarandığını ve hiçbir şekilde "intihal içermediğini" beyan ederim. Herhangi bir zamanda, çalışmamla ilgili yaptığım bu beyana aykırı bir durumun saptanması durumunda, ortaya çıkacak tüm ahlaki ve hukuki sonuçlara razı olduğumu bildiririm.



(İmza)

Diana Carolina Zuñiga Gomez

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ABBREVIATIONS

CMC : Computer-Mediated Communication

DIYANET : Presidency of Religious Affairs

VC : Virtual Communities

SOC : Sense of Community

SOVC : Sense of Virtual Community

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the invention of internet most of the aspect of daily live have move into the World Wide Web; libraries, business and others, have created websites, blogs, forums and other spaces aiming to spread and gather information. Nevertheless, the spirituality took place also on the cyberspace, beginning like solid texts to the extent of develop them into virtual churches with online rituals (Casey, 2006), religion on internet has suffered a change in what was considered as sacred performs or spaces.

In last several years, there is an interesting, but highly important, development in Latin American countries: the number of Muslim converts is rising at an unusual speed.[1] It is currently out of both academic and political attention. However, this growth is not only important for political reasons, but also for the way these new communities are being developed through the use of internet and their aspects as online communities based on real ones in an environment where there are almost no visible indications of Islam as a cultural or political element in society.

1.1. Problem

What is the use of Facebook given by the Latino Muslim communities as a communication tool? This is not only an issue with theoretical dimensions, but also with practical day-to-day life. There is no a big Muslim population in Latin America. Most of the Muslims in Latino America live in distant places, far away from each other. As there is no strong face-to-face relation, it increases the role and importance of online communication among Latino Muslims. By using online spaces like Facebook, they shape experience, knowledge and information that in one way or another should help to build a sense of community.

[1] "Árabes y Musulmanes en América Latina", 17 March 2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/spanish/specials/newsid_4294000/4294241.stm (Accessed on 10.16.13)

It is having been quite commonly study human being and its conduct by scientist and anthropologist not only in nearby places but also in those that are far away or constitute kind of mystery due to the remote areas where they live and type of culture. However the fast growing advances in technology and specially in the communication field, are changing humans and how are their perceived by their pairs and by the academicians. New trends in research are surging about new topics, yet how distant societies are relating within them, and how the technology shape their interaction with far-away people is lacking of strategies to be researched.

While, many of the Islamic organizations has presence online not all of them have specialized staff in communication and new technologies and not all groups or fan-page belong to organizations (some of them are made by the initiative of a single member). In Latin America especially due to the lack of funding and personal, it even may seen as unnecessary, thus, communication inside this online communities is carried on in an empirical way. At the organization level to recognizing the failings and strong points may lead to a better performance of the community toward other organizations and public itself, meanwhile at the social level, it can improve the engagement of the members inside the community and with other communities for those who are immigrants.

In order to contest the situation and bring functional solutions, communication and public relations practitioners are aroused, seeking to understand the way these communities use new spaces like Facebook as medium to interact and communicate among themselves.

1.2. Purpose

The purpose of this research is to make a contribution in how to improve the sense of community as well the use of e-spaces as Facebook to built virtual communities do not depending on the offline ones. It also hopes to help the members of such minorities to understand and improve the way they interact from a theoretical and academic perspective. The following questions will be answered:

RQ1: There is sense of virtual community in the Latino Muslim groups on Facebook?

- Is there Recognition of members?
- Is there identity and identification?
- Is there relationship among the members?
- Is there exchange of support?
- Is there attachment?
- Is there obligation?

RQ2: Is there engagement to these types of online groups by its members?

RQ3: What are the practices, content and topics used on e-spaces in Facebook by Latino Muslim e-communities?

RQ4: Are there discussion structures, who and what, in the Latino Muslims communities online?

RQ5: Is there authority or hierarchy in Facebook groups?

RQ6: Are built links between Latino Muslims e-communities and the broader Muslim (e-) communities? If so, what are they for?

This thesis will analyze 10 Facebook Latino Islamic sites. It will basically look at four elements to analyze their sense of community: sense of virtual community, communication practices, links with overall Islamic world, who and what sets their discussion structures in the spaces, and lastly, the issue of hierarchy, participation and management. Each of the metrics is crucial to develop a sense of belonging and sense of community.

1.3. Importance

This research is important for the academia and the Islamic communities because there are few writings about it, and they are mostly about religion online (Anderson, 1997), it means information about religion on the Internet, not the religion as an experience online. Were found some empirical and superficial writings in blogs or online communities, but these are more or less based on personal accounts and do not treat this case in particular as an academic subject. The aim is to transfer this knowledge to academia; because of distance Latino Muslims mostly use e-spaces.

This e-space knowledge is available, but it has always the issue of manipulation and misinterpretations, even falsehood due to the fact it is very difficult to find up to date information and related statistics about the numbers of Latino Muslims, and thus about their presence online, but this does not undervalue the importance and urgency of this socially developing issue for an academic study.

In the academic arena there are many publications about the use of Internet for religions, basically websites, forums, and chatrooms. Going forward with the emergence of YouTube, LinkedIn, Facebook and others, it is clear that there are not many studies focusing in the use of these e-spaces as a way of communication by religious communities.

Muslim community is a fast growing one in quantities in Latin America, and according to an estimate each week, between one and three people are becoming Muslim in each mosque that increase the number in rapidly. In the Latin American context, the communities are usually formed by mostly women converts, along with men and Arab Muslim who immigrated there at various times (Bruckmayr, 2010). It is hard to understand why all those people are being part of a religion that comes from the other side of the world, from a completely unknown culture. More importantly, how do they develop a sense of community, despite the geographical distance between Latin America and the Muslim world. Having in mind the lack of affinity between the Islamic and Latino culture plus the fact that there is an enormous lack of knowledge in

Latin America about Islam and Muslims (Karpat, 1985; Klich and Lesser, 1998) the usage of internet is the main source of knowledge in these areas. Consequently, groups and communities on the Internet have been born to fulfill the need of belonging as well as the lack of knowledge.

The intention to write this thesis is motivated for variety of reasons and the research hopes to contribute to wider society and academia in several ways, as well as establishing a line between the developing Latino Muslim community and overall Islamic world in terms of understanding/interpretation the way they use e-spaces as a tool of communication.

1.4. Assumptions

This research's assumptions are:

(i) The organizations own a single and official space

(ii) All members of the Latino Muslims communities in Facebook are Muslims.

1.5. Limits

Like in every research, there are some limitations either methodologically or otherwise. Some of them can be listed as following:

1- The researched will be carried on Facebook groups and Facebook official pages of Muslims or Islamic associations, cultural centers or mosques in Latin America according to the information provided by Presidency of Religious Affairs (DIYANET) about The "First Latin American Muslim Leaders Religious Summit" in Istanbul and the information collected on the "First Congress of Latino Muslim Women in Latin America" in Mexico City due that the search on Facebook using the key words "Muslims", "Latinos", "Islam" followed by the names of the Latino countries resulted in many sites, making impossible to know if these were

official sites. Those communities that provided their official space in Facebook will be analyzed.

2- In the observation and participative part of the research special attention will be given to those spaces, which has been representative of the Latino Muslims both in terms of Latino Islamic environment and active use of Facebook.
3- For the observation there is always the risk that information in Facebook is susceptible to fast expansion, changes and elimination, as well as for the members
4- The lack of the literature and similar studies of SOVC have made the research to stick to the model proposed by Blanchard and Markus of SOVC in 2002.
5- The study will be limited to the months of May, June and July of 2016.
6- The research will be limited to the communities of Latino Muslims. Arab colonies and settlements will not be considered as part of this work.
7- The countries to have into consideration are the Latino American ones excluding the Caribbean countries and those that Spanish language is not official language, being then: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, México, Nicaragua, Panamá, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela.
8- Only Facebook spaces provided by the official organizations will be analyzed limitation the number in order to assure that pages belong to an officially established organization.
9- Due to the language limitations, a single researcher will carry out the research.
10- Human factor in doing research in social sciences is always a limitation.

1.6. Definitions

For this research some terms will be used and it is necessary clarify its definitions in order to avoid misunderstandings. There are presented below:

America: American continent

Adhan: Islamic call to prayer

Arab Muslims: Muslims who was born on Arab countries or raised in an Arab family

Avatar: a small picture or figure that represents a computer user in a game, on the Internet, etc.

Iftar: Is the dinner that Muslims have everyday during Ramadan after the sunset.

Ijtihad: is an Islamic legal term that means "independent reasoning".

Imam: Islamic leader of a mosque or Islamic community.

Hadith: Are the actions or saying done by the Islamic prophet, Muhammad.

Hajj: Islamic Pilgrimage.

Muslim Converts: Muslims who changed their previous belief to Islam

Latin America: A region which share Spanish language as mother tongue formed by Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Uruguay and Venezuela

Ramadan: Is the Islamic month of fasting, every year changes but in the moon calendar is the ninth month.

Shahadah (shahadat, pl.): an Islamic declaration in the oneness of God (tawhid) and the acceptance of Muhammad as God's last prophet, is said by Muslims and by those to become Muslim.

Suhur: It is the breakfast that Muslims do during Ramadan everyday before the sunrise.

Ummah: Islamic Community

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Below the literature review about religion and Internet, communities and sense of community s resented:

2.1. Religion In Internet

In the last three decades technology has made huge changes in the world affecting people's life, banking, business, education and so much more have been touch by the dramatic technology development. The religion, how is perceived it and how fellows practice it, has changed with this new age of advances, for instance, the support has led to a new way that sermons are now done and distributed the use of faxes or cassettes (Anderson, 1997), and in smaller populations even printed.

Technology allowed to religious organization deliver the message to unreachable geographic and publics with the use of printed media and radio frequencies, making a reshaping of habits and behaviors not only by the sender or messages, in this case the institutions but also by those who receive them, the fellows. In fact regarding to the usage of old media by the church, there has been found a relation with the attendance, while radio does not show a big influence, television seems to make people more sedentary and those believers who are conservative seems be "negative related" to watch violent and sexual content (Armfield and Holbert, 2003). Here an influence on the media consume can be seen, old media such as newspapers, radio or television has an impact on people religious behaviors and routines, (Cobb, 1998; Zaleski, 1997).

One of the most important technological advances perhaps, is the appearance of Internet, almost all aspects of humans' lives have turned into it, big and small decisions can be made through simple actions or devices. In over all, the apparition of the internet did not bring new forms but rather change the way humans get along with each other and information as consequences new results and perspectives for the

public (Anderson, 1997) that are applicable to religion and media studies. Observing from a consumer or receiver perspective, old and new media created a complete new understanding of religion, but it is important to see how people express their creeds.

A shift in thinking starts to surge, where internet carry out the feature of giving new practices, allowing an improvement of values that add new ones to the experience for both body and mind, as a result, a new type of spirituality is conceived overpassing the old conceptions of convictions and practices, thus new awareness about religion can be formed, reinforcing the fact that media can and do change the manner society approach and live their beliefs.

Internet also makes a change in the dynamics, there is mayor agency and thus much more speed and information delivered directly, it allows the communication not only in two ways (transmitter-receiver) as in the past, but many to many and the communication itself is not anymore leaded by a single actor; it is worked as a network between the users supporting each-other, this is also perceived in the religious ambit (Helland, 2000). It can "potentially connect anything to anything, providing the ability to develop networks on a scale that had never before been imagined" (Helland, 2007). The communication now is computer mediated it means that, any interactions are carried out through new devices between two or more people this has completely change the way human beings do communicate and even socialize in the last decade, although supports like e-mail is quite old now, the Computer mediated communication (also named, CMC) has allowed a mediatization of the religious life itself (Kong, 2001).

In the past the only way to access to a different belief was through a temple or congregation, or an acquaintance, now the fast growing of some societies and their economies plus the unstoppable technological advances has complete changed the religious sphere, people can now access to any religious creed in any moment and from any space, not only obtaining information but also getting the experience and perspective of what it is and is not (Larsson, 2005). The term of religiosity itself has changed giving it new aspects and forms, even though spirituality during history has

remained as a private part of human life not further shown more than in temples or ceremonies, with the use of new technologies and Internet this aspect of life has moved into a more personal-public space. This is particularly important in a person's life as far as the theory of uses and gratification takes place with the use of internet (Armfield and Holbert, 2003), and diverse examples of how fellows benefit of this new processes can be pointed, such as, religious chainmail, online prayer groups, wikis, and others are basic elements of use and gratifications. It can be said that the possibilities increased markedly characteristics like recognition, knowledge, sharing and going beyond borders may be some of the greatest satisfaction a believer or any person can get. The availability of the information and tools on the web is a work field for those seeking spiritual knowledge or services and they see a good opportunity to gain in it, (Bainbridge, 2000; Bedell, 2000).

In the same way old media alter religious behaviors on somebody internet does it too, it is hard to prove that all faith or beliefs individuals are effected by the usage of new technologies such as internet, due to that those who claim to have higher spiritual connection to divinities has a lower tendency to use technology and thus internet, the main reason are that they keep their devoutness in a private and personal level or because they have a higher involvement with the nearest community so the use of old and local media seems to be more appropriate to be an active member (Buddenbaum and Stout, 1996). On the other side, the usage of Internet is higher in those who look for a worldwide community engagement and communication (Armfield and Holbert, 2003). The phenomenon of the new system is seen where there are migration flows and cultural meeting points, for instance in Europe with the Muslims, culture and identity are convey in daily life with locals and immigrants (Chawki, 2010).

It is argued that a new tendency has aroused in the connection between technology and society, and there are studies on relation between religion and technology or Internet. Consequently, is not that technology changes the public but instead, the technology has been part of society in different forms called tools, belongings, objects, etc. (Kong, 2001). The society sees the technology as a result

between the interaction of the technical and human factor, technology can be transformed according to the society and its metises in order to fit into its necessities and principles, this process is also called “domestication” (Campbell, 2005).

In the area of academics, thinkers of contemporary media has ignored the relation of religion and media, but it has not diminished its potential as a field of studies, because it represents a great developing experience of the processes in the society and how that relationship affects the meaning and performance of religion (Hoover, 2002). Besides, it is essential to observe how religion in today’s world changes what is known as communication and media. As far as religion is part of culture it can be evaluated how culture changes and develops, and how sacred is the new space and the communication for religious people (Linderman and Lövheim, 2003).

Observing the metaphors of Meyrowitz (1997) where media works as a channel, language and environment, one may distinguish the manifestation of religion on internet in two ways: one as an information source (media as a channel and a language) where there are messages and symbols carried usually by mass media guiding what to see, where, from whom, in which formats, what to tell, how to consume it, etc., and second, as a online experience (Media as an environment) where there is a interaction and communication between publics and institutions among themselves. Concerning about this, transformations in the religion has happened as well as in the rituals, scholars believe that such changes, do create changes in the societies, perceptions, thought and behaviors (Casey, 2006).

2.1.1. Religion as online experience

The practice of religion through internet is also know as “Online Religion” (Tsai, 2015), while lots of physical content moved to the web, little by little, rituals and experiences starts a transition too. There are two main focuses, one virtual churches and second is the virtualization of the rituals.

A good proof of this are The Anglican Internet Church that is actually in service (http://anglicaninternetchurch.net/ Accessed on 04.10.15) and the London Internet Church (http://londoninternetchurch.org.uk/ Accessed on 09.05.2015) also in service this phenomena is described as:

> "The Church is an online ministry with a real-world counterpart, a non-denominational Christian Church incorporated in the state of Alabama. The church is not officially affiliated with Episcopal Church USA, although it does maintain ties with the Communion of Evangelical Episcopal Churches. The Episcopalian faith maintains the ancient Catholic sacraments, creeds, and orders of the church, yet rejects the authority of the Pope, instead placing emphasis on the authority of the Bible. (Casey, 2006)."

These examples lead to the question if religion practiced online, and how is it practiced? This question is answered by the examples given before. Whereas internet offered alternative way of communication and support for media, it also created what is called "techno-religious spaces", with a new whole set of meanings and configurations, these spaces facilitate the communication by uploading old media like radio or television, and integrating it to new applications and resources of internet (Kong, 2001). One of the expressions that better show the use of the cutting edge functions implemented to the techno space is the realization of the rituals through Internet.

Despite of the informality and spontaneity of internet, some of the virtual churches have specific time for their services, well-defined hierarchy (leader, congregation and attenders) and helpers to assist during the sessions and afterwards (Schroeder, Heather and Lee, 1998).

Although at the beginning believers could not practice spiritual rituals by Internet because the space where only textual and this limited the actions, some creeds are based and focused on the religious texts, others rely on their force to their ceremonies.

The technology is redefined in order to meet specific religious needs and traditional acts (Helland, 2007; Becker 2011). The traditional churches may be compared with the virtual ones although they share features like the way of congregations, topics and hierarchy others were completely altered, for instance, the verbally became textual and graphic (emoticons), the ties became weak and meeting became more casual and atemporal, however it open a wide number of new characteristics such as the internationalization and the allowance to non-believers or fellows to participate or watch their ceremonies (Schroeder, Heather and Lee, 1998).

Nowadays, Internet achieved to integrated all media communications in one, in a single space; one may find newspaper, television, radio, supported by texts, images, audio and video (Anderson, 1997). Internet became is a space that enable spiritual exercise where people could spread and practice religion standing for their divine beliefs (Campbell, 2005). As consequence online live sessions recreate Eucharist or pilgrimage for instance. Internet became a new media for the rituals, adapting the support and the ritual to the new environment and resources online, what it seems to be difficult for some academics is to analyze how it can change the ritual and the religious sensibilities through the new adjustment (Chawki, 2010).

For instance in the 1990's, pilgrimage became widespread as well the transmission of rituals through Internet (Hallend, 2007). Any ritual performed on real or virtually is a type of transaction, fellows leave something material in exchange of something spiritual or symbolic. Platforms like SecondLife are known as multi-user virtual environment (MUVE), those are well known for its capacity to recreate religious rituals such as visits to virtual temples or pilgrimages such as Hajj (Islamic pilgrimage), (Derrickson, 2008). Exact replicas of mosques like Qurtoba and Mecca, and temples like Sistine Chapel can be found in SecondLife. Rituals as prayers, offerings and pilgrimage can be done through this space. Regarding the validity of Islamic rituals, scholars agreed that they are valid as an extra, preparation or learning for action but they do not replace the real ritual, in fact monitoring by scholars is required, (Chawki, 2010).

Although believers try to find out new ways to worship and practice their religion or beliefs in different aspects of their life, in the past, religion's practice depended on the authority and the mediatisation of the religion lead to both aspects, secularization and sacralization both occurring at the same time but in different ways (Hjarvard, 2006). First, people can practice their faith regardless the authority, and second, there is a new configuration of what is sacred, because despite the absence of an online ritual, the new configurations allowed by internet may affect the meaning of religious representation and practice (Schroeder, Heather and Lee, 1998).

There is a big debate about how valid (sacred) are the rituals performed online or virtually. It is considered the Virtuality as a flexible alternative to the reality when the reality cannot be achieved. Although people and actions are not physically there, the effect of Virtuality allows us to perceive it as a reality, for instance a drawing is not a replace of the thing but it is an alternative (Norton, 1972).

The fact that the spiritual ritual took different shapes lead to many to the question of validity, if those ritual are good or bad (may be seen as innovation), however scholars emphasize in the acceptance by the fellows of the action as a viable ritual with its meanings and symbolizations (Casey, 2006), therefore it is not about its qualification as good or bad, but its lawful and validity once it is transformed and has taken a new space.

A common fear by the devotees is that Internet may damage the real congregations, as well as members and their relations with the divinity (Tsai, 2015). Even, media has been portrait as evil; also as source of the struggle between good and bad, nevertheless, media can emphasis in morals independently of the spiritual aspect (Hjarvard, 2006). The morality in internet leads also to the intention, in the Islamic views, for instance the intention is strongly weight within the actions, however nobody can know others intention. In the same way it is hard to identify who are really practitioners in Internet and how valid or not are their rituals.

For some ethnographers both real presence and interaction are required, the lack of physical presence does not invalid the efficiency of a ritual (O'leary, 1996). In fact, today many transactions are done through Internet from banking to marriages; the new supports have changed the validity and weight of the words. For instance videos are valid today as proofs although these are not the actions per see. These types of supports have enough details although it lacks the validity to confirm on who does them and its authority.

2.1.2. Internet as information source

Internet is a strong space for the information; this is called "religion online", Hackett (2006). Many sacred books and text has been digitalized and can be found on websites and databases. It was the primary form of religion online, one of its characteristics is that these were not linked to other webs and the communication was in one way, in may cases ignoring if the information was reached any receptor, no way of feedback or exchanges were possible (Helland, 2007). However, new expressions came into the World Wide Web.

One of the first bulletins dedicated to religious issues started in the seventy's named "Origins", in that time spiritual topics began to permeate Internet in a fast way (Helland, 2007). Today, a simple search in any browser can be easily through endless results of websites, blogs, forums and thousands of documents about any religion or the topic in general. For information, learning, practice, research and advocacy (Tsai, 2015). But the real strength of the religion on the Internet can be perceived in virtual institutions or in the use of web 2.0 and social media.

It is as easy to get and deliver information, the constant development of technology and Internet plus the growing internet users generations permitted an access to religion as a general topic, also upper the lever of academic expertise and modern education, becoming the main function of internet the spread and search for knowledge (Anderson, 2008). For instance although in that time was not possible to perform the rituals on the web it helped to deliver and develop the information and

webs to the point that some mass media get appropriated the ritual becoming themselves as a pure channel of transmission (Hjarvard, 2006).

With the massive generation of contents and spaces a separation started to surge, an example in the 1980's in the discussion web USENET, there was a division, member of the community tired of biblical content requested a new space free of moderators and censorships, bringing up a space for debate and discussion not only propagation. In the same way, Jews requested their own group where their traditions and beliefs could be discussed and expressed; despite the different trends among themselves they could share their common Jewish background (Helland, 2007).

Today the same phenomenon can be seen; different trends aim to inform, get new converts and reaffirm their faiths and look for their own spaces. For instance, websites, email list, chatrooms, forums, etc., are part of this trend. (Kong. 2001). Many aggrupations among big religions and its sects can be found through Internet, each trend has given importance to be online and in their own space. Internet empowered the old limited communications into a more fluent, available and visible source of information for the population as well (Anderson, 1997).

2.2. Islam Appears In Internet

As any other religion, Islam looked for its presence on the web. The engagement of Muslims (irrespective of their nationality) to technology can be observed by their presence online and the quantity of information on the web (Chawki, 2010). There are three stages that can be seen (Anderson, 2001):

First was in the early stage that goes back to the 1970's and 1980's when there were few official organizations online. The Muslim students living in Europe and United States of America were having education in technology and they have plenty access to Internet that was more developed there than in their home countries, were who bring to internet Islam aiming to have presence of their religion (Anderson, 2007) and was characterized by the particular empirical effort to take freedom of speech to their countries. Another aspect was the lack of surveillance by religious authorities that did not represent any official cleric in its diffusion (Varisco, 2010). By that time, although there were not official records of it, there were movement and organizations backing up nodes to establish a kind of network. This was latter more visible, Muslim Student Association websites appeared at the University of Southern California and MIT, were the Quran was provided in a digital version as for the other Islamic content like Hadith (Anderson, 2001). Muslims students tried to create a data-base and discussion groups with co-religionists online, along with issues related to the daily life of Muslims in foreign societies, they tried to combine reasoning, sciences and religion, as a new Islamic speech (Anderson, 2001). Some of the anonymous students, were, for example:

> "Dr. Marwan Muasher who became famous as Jordan's Minister of Information for installing the Internet free of restrictions placed on media. Dr. Ahmed Nazif in Egypt went from a government think tank that introduced the Internet to become Egypt's first Minister of Communication and Information Technology with rollout of public Internet, and Dr. Sami Khiyami in Syria taught a generation of engineers who founded the Syrian

> Computer Society to campaign for introducing the Internet there" (Anderson, 2013).

Besides the migration reason, the boom of Islam in internet is also related to some politics, a trend in the United States of America of neo-evangelization in part by the election of the president Gerald Ford in 1976 and the Iranian Islamic revolution tree years later. This boosted the feeling of Muslim in the world and identity of Iranians (Hoover, 2008).

The second stage is itself around the 1990's as a fusion of religion and culture (Anderson, 2008). This was a sort of a "re-intellectualization of Islam that seek to relate it to perceptions of current conditions and respond to the range and in the forms of those conditions" (Anderson, 2008). Part of it, was carried out by radical activists opening different way of communication and the presence of official institutions, both aiming to interact and validate their views (Anderson, 2001). Those online organizations where characterized by appealing universal values going beyond the limits of the Islamic community, and by the fact of legitimate participation in the transference of knowledge but not as a source of authority (Anderson, 2008).

In this stage Muslims abroad were concerned about how to live an Islamic life in a modern society away from the Islamic environment and facilities; but those remaining in the majority Muslims countries also started to see in Internet for manifestations of mundane and sacred at the local level (Anderson, 2008).

The third stage is what can be call a normalization of Islam in Internet, Muslims tries to find a balance between their daily life and the Islamic discourse, without go to any extreme, in this period can be observed that the presence of well-known organizations is more recurrent and strong, this associations look for a more direct interaction with their public as well increasing their followers, they provided information but went beyond giving support in all means, they also introduce new actors and new sources of knowledge leaving behind the traditional ones despite the big distances and borders (Anderson, 2001; 2009). Although many of the Islamic

majority countries have a deficiency in Internet access, they also have restrictions, however many of the information remain as documents, videos or audios of sermons and artworks (Varisco, 2010). Currently, there is a worry about the information spread and the sects such as, Sunnis and Shias; the migration to the Internet opened a new question about who are these Muslims online and how this process is developing (Varisco, 2010).

In the 2000's onward, there is an attraction for Islam after 9/11. Media focused on portray an image of "Islamic terrorism" as a consequence all regarding to Islam was mediated and public received it as a truth despite of its validity, and religious or political perspective. Mass media base its information in limited sources that is mostly official organs. To understand the events it is necessary to understand both religion and context, however, people seek for the origins of the problem in the religion and its effects overlooking in the political events. The clear influence of media in globalization thanks to no boundaries gives as result, a distancing between west and them, the Arabs or Muslims, plus a incalculable speed of transmission of information related to these issues (Hoover, 2008).

In this last phase it is also important to point how the change caused by the web 2.0. At the begging, the production of content was limited to those who had access and the skills that consumed by the same type of people. The born of web 2.0 passed the way humans communicate from one way to one-to-many and consequently many-to-many (Eickelman and Anderson, 2003) brought a new term "prosumer" which means that the user do not have only the capacity to consume but also to produce (Guerrero, 2011). The accessibility and the facilities to use internet make possible that Muslims from all over the world can enter to internet and have social networks, access to literature, and have other types of manifestation of themselves in a religious ambits (Varisco, 2010). This is reflected on the diversity and lots of Islamic contents in Internet, from merely scanned texts, audios, videos to blogs and social networks (Chawki, 2010).

2.2.1. Islamic websites

Islamic websites started as a digitalization of text and books, basically copied content from offline formats to Internet. Today, a great number of Islamic websites can be found, though, in the last years those related to Islamic purposes were developed into more complex spaces, due to the tendency of Muslims to represent their spiritual and politic life through the screens (Chawki, 2010) and seek a better understanding of how to life as a Muslim in a modern society. Other significant reason for the website is the access by woman to certain topics not only about religion or culture but also about femininity (Mishra and Semaan, 2010).

There is an encouragement for participation. In the Spanish speaker sphere this phenomenon was studied in the website WebIslam which is designed lead to the user to act and respond (Guerrero, 2011). Among its features, it could be found surveys, breaking news, bulletin, chat among other, now consultancy, blog, forum, directory, library and even a login accesses. Users not only send responses but some of them became part of the website team by contributing with content (Guerrero, 2011). The website has connections with other official Islamic sites and is considered as an example of many-to-many communication (Guerrero, 2011). However, not all websites has met the new demand from its public which is the case of Junta Islamica, which is an Spanish association for the Muslim communities with a big gap between the strategies and requirements of its public (Guerrero, 2011). So far, up-to-date it remains as a plane space where news, projects and some audiovisual content are displayed, but there is no personalization for the user or interaction. It is essential to understand that the communication done by this type of spaces is empirical and experimental in most of the cases (Guerrero, 2011). It is also important to point, that many mosques, Islamic centers or organization until now do not have a website. This mean that it is not a priority for them or, perhaps there is a barrier among them and the environment where they operate (Guerrero, 2011).

A good exemplification of the websites are the ones held by Oxford, which includes, “The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World, The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World, The Islamic World: Past and Present, The Oxford Dictionary of Islam, The Oxford History of Islam, What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam”, and The Encyclopedia of Islam Online (Chawki, 2010)

2.2.2. Islamic forums and groups

Some websites allowed the participation either by email or on the website itself creating forums or newsgroups. Islam as a religion is shown as very cultural and interactive on the Internet, spaces as the groups are the result of better alternative of Islam for those communities, which are blended and have continuous movement (Anderson, 1997). For such as immigration. Groups are considered more than an association, because it is debated if Internet has a real power of forming communities, although they may be established. It is hard to keep their real characteristics virtually, so they are more spaces for information rather than solidarity (Anderson, 2009) and this make them unstable and changeable. These spaces help to maintain the Muslim community (Ummah) in the virtual realm, and the sense of community at the same time the information is managed in a non-vertical and non-hierarchical form (Marcotte, 2010).

These are spaces for dialogue, debate or claim and a source of information. There is also the visual evidence of Islam trough images, words, nicknames and the code of conduct in some of the groups and forums, and the information managed there (Becker, 2011) with a special characteristics. They turn around of the same interest, the participant have the same status of authority, however this can be fragmented but not transferred, they have the same goal but what spotlights one to other is the argument or evidence of what they are talking about, as result some will support, while others will step back (Anderson, 1997). The discourse handled on Islamic groups and forums require certain normativity, both in behavior and in terms of what and how information is shared, for that, all member must use references from Quran and

Sunnah in order to support their material (Becker, 2011). Some religious group users tend to be well-educated and moneyed, their members seems to share similar socio-economic characteristics and have a filiation with certain religious groups creating a power that disfavor others (Kong, 2001).

From other perspective, one not less important fact is the fight for leadership or recognition point to some negative aspects such as misconceptions, disputes or judgments. The lack of a real authority result not solving or preventing these incidents that may end up as division or fight between groups (Kong, 2001). For Muslims the authority relies on the knowledge and practice of their leaders more than in their role (Tsai, 2015). Thus, figuring as a religious leader on the web must be supported by actions and expertise. Users or believers take religion by their own methods leading to a new thinking, understanding and appliance of Islam not necessary coming from official sources (Anderson, 1997). However, there is a lack of authority to point what is true and what is false in the groups (Kong, 2001).

There is evidence that religious groups have certain apathy to those who do not share their beliefs. Being apart of other inclinations, being a reason for being considered as enemies, which may be expressed in the group or in other groups that are not aligned with their principles (Schroeder, Heather and Lee, 1998). The global Islamic authorities have an impact of the local ones, being through a structure or agenda (Tsai, 2015), their presence or at least representation of them in these spaces could decrease confrontations.

In all groups it is important to know that problems can occur, not only each member may suffer their own glitches but as a group, it is important not to be careless in the personal o community level to keep an harmony, in this sense both common objectives, communications, activates and norms, must be carefully settled and watched, this will be essential for the good developing and maintain of the group (Memmi, 2006).

2.2.3. Islamic blogs

The blogs are user generated content, most of the information is par of personal expression in a public space, most of them are a kind of diaries, and in fact most of them remain like that and has few or no readers. However an important number are dedicated to politics and activism (Anderson, 2009). One of the advantages of blogs is that they are shared by the readers, creating networks and in some cases alliances. They also link information from other sites and transform the discussions (Anderson, 2009). Many of the blogs are written by people under 30 years old and part of their followers stay as part of their off-line social environment where they share interest in common. In this respect blogs by Muslims shared the characteristic of low reading (Varisco, 2010).

During the 90's the prime time on TV programs had and increment of religious contents and Islamic subjects in the whole mass media, creating a clash of what were Islam and the west and its representations of it (Hoover, 2008). The web content increased about the religion and the blogs setting point of views and trying to show personal positions. Blogs allow a maximum personalization of the space where Muslims can present themselves as they wish without any supervision of their community. There is no single rule for the Islamic identity, it also renegotiate the authority over the behavior, including religion as part of culture not as a unique and single mode of life (Varisco, 2010).

The way blogs emerge and become popular depend on the linkage with others blogs and external links (Anderson, 2009). In fact this network of blogs is the base of the structure for social networks like Twitter and Facebook, which manage micro-blogging (Anderson, 2013). Mainly, this associations are called networks more than communities, in which they have a central goal, mostly seeking for information or solidarity, for the blogs is principally information seeking. The networks are at the beginning formed by family and friends, then by people interested or supporters (Anderson, 2009).

The emerged digital environment where user generate content has converted to the part of the system, bringing the user to a level where s/he can create, post and share, while, positioning the content in a public sphere by opening it to a wider level of communication and interaction (Mainsah, 2014). There is not only an expansion at the geographical level but also in design and distribution of the content and its formats, through social media, blogs or forums. Any topic has its own online place including religion, no matter its background or size (Casey, 2006), lead by scholars and official organizations to take actions.

2.2.4. Islamic authority online

Conventionally, knowledge belonged to traditional association as family, education or churches, which were in charge to teach, from information to ethics and spread information among to the members (Hjarvard, 2006). Traditionally the authority was defined in three ways: first, they were given to any legal organization. Second, the one which involves obedience to a traditional authority and, third, the one which is motivated by good actions or example that is more charismatic (Tsai, 2015). However, today the information is available in Internet and mass media, which does not only guides society into values and morality but also became a strong source of information about society (Hjarvard, 2006).

According to Mandaville (2001) there are three important aspects while understanding religious authority on Internet: first, Muslims have their own interpretations of Quran and Sunnah or follow those who question the doctrine and challenge the religious authorities. Second, there is a reformulation of Islam through Internet. Third, Muslims in non-Arab countries are highly active on the web so they are self-thought on reinterpreting values and principles of Islam in order to fit it to their new context due to the lack of accurate guidance by the traditional cleric.

By the transfer of authority to Internet, many of the users are more interested than really trained; they have enough access to information to take position (Anderson, 1997). There is a fight between popularity and Islamic knowledge where an important

amount of information that is key at the time of self-positioning in the space (Piela, 2013). These dynamics carried on by Internet seems to divide the Islamic community, the extent range of opinions and interpretations of Islam may open new ways for Muslims in a good sense but it can create misunderstandings about the religion and culture, and break down the authority (Larsson, 2005). It is seen as a hazard for Muslims who take information from Internet and create their own interpretations and discourses, where evidences can be questioned and debated (Larsson, 2005).

Due to the empiric information distributed in Internet with a deficient of Islamic erudition (Anderson, 2008) and the absence of Islamic authority online, defenders and followers of Islam get into the scene aiming to correct the interpretations given by amateurism of the beginners of spreading Islamic information on the web (Anderson, 2013). Therefore, many organization starts to open websites where they could communicate their messages, however they did not allow an exchange of information (Helland, 2007). The main problem, is that religious organization do not know what is the best way to present their beliefs (O'leary, 1996) and posting content, remains as a one-way communication where involvement was low or zero (Guerrero, 2011).

Media plays an important role when presenting religious topics, because there is a transformation in the messages, its content and goals, which also imply a change in the representation, authority of religion and its institutions, as well as how people deal with the issues related to those (Hjarvard, 2006). Although for Muslims, it is very important to cite the Quran as a sign of authority (Tsai, 2015) often, in mass media communication this references are forgotten.

2.2.5. Online fatwas

The struggle between public and organizations for authority along with a large presence of Muslims in no-Muslim countries bring a high number of consultations about daily basis and personal inquires. Looking for the rightest answer to these issues, people search for an Islamic advice. A fatwa is a verdict or ruling respecting to a specific problem or topic.

In general, a fatwa is asked by a Muslim which is evaluated by the Mufti (Islamic scholars who give legal opinions), the verdict is published on the website or the requester will have the chance of a session with a prominent erudite where the decision is not usually shared online (Šisler, 2007).

This websites have fatwas touching topics like, Islamic politics, Muslim minorities, cultural and religious concerns, establishment in new societies, and there is an evaluation of their gains and loss when living abroad (Chawki, 2010). For instance for Muslim woman it is important to have fatwa, well being required or by reading those published because they are a source for answering their concerns (Piela, 2013). Many of the sites offering fatwas are independent, give advice to Muslims minorities in Europe or United States of America, meanwhile some official organizations or governments possess others or are associated to them, this may have influence on the creation of Islamic knowledge among Muslims in the west (Šisler, 2007). However, there is an important diversity about what is right and not (Grillo, 2004). If Internet provides a lot of information about Islam, it also points the different groups inside the religion and their characteristic of differences that are more easily seen by young Muslims in diaspora, who try to separate religion and culture of their country of origin (Šisler 2007). Young Muslims look through Internet opinions and positions to be discussed among their environment, to finally take those that are more convenient to them, in this way it is seem that authority of Islam is privatize and individualized (Šisler 2007).

The access to mass media and Internet has shift the inquiries done by Muslims, there is a increasing interest of fatwas in global or political issue, what can mean that there is a birth of universal identity, a reconfiguration in the Islamic community is being undergone by Muslim around the globe who seek for an Islamic answer rather than a journalist (Šisler 2007).

According to Caeiro (2003) and Mandaville (2003) Europe is a good example where there is not mufti and or Islamic authorities, the Muslim minorities in Europe are not that small (Grillo, 2004) and there it is very important to access to fatwas for

two reasons. First, is to help to build an Islamic culture and second, there is a kind of ruling where a problem is presented, although fatwas do not determine social behavior for the immigrants, they are used as an Islamic discourse to legitimize their behavior. Although these have been developed in these new environments, where social conditions are tough for Muslim immigrants, Islam is not a priority for them anymore rather than survival (Grillo 2004).

The abundance of information about Islam not only in Europe but everywhere ranges from very liberal to very conservative. Due to the lack of well-known authorities, internet fulfill its role misleading people where anyone can claim to be erudite not only in Europe but also in places where there is a low or null representation of Islam (Šisler, 2007). The debate and information exchange open the opportunity to people to declare themselves as knowledgeable in Islam due to the fact that they can get information and do interpretations or judgments by their own, which called Ijtihad (Chawki, 2010) an Islamic legal term that means independent reasoning.

One may wonder about these spaces in internet and their affect on the identities of the religious communities summed dissimilarities in the places where they live or came from, plus democratizations processes and how are affected each-other virtual and real life (Kong, 2001). There most be a difference when it is asked about the Muslims living in Europe and the European Muslims (Grillo, 2004). This also created a debate that can be extended to other regions where there is no direct connection or reference to Islam like Latin America to which this thesis will focus.

2.3. Online Communities

Internet changed the human conceptions of conversations by time (the immediacy) and community (shared space) however there is a conscious of the print media, no matter what are the content or messages yet those are being released through the writing (O'leary, 1996). An interesting function of Internet as a media is that not only release information but it has also a cultural roll like positioning humans in a

whole system called society, can create and sustain communities and mediate the relation of the being with its environment (Hjarvard, 2006).

Academics in the area of relations and internet support the idea that these aggrupations can lead to strong interactions and real contact, they foment and boost the real communities and enhance relations of members when conditions are difficult (Memmi, 2006), some other scholars though, do not see internet as a medium for communities, in fact consider those to be imaginary, this formations online are seen as a migration from offline spaces yet lacking solidarity ties so it is difficult to pretend them be communities on the web, based on the interactions and self-representation on the core (Anderson, 2008).

Although authors have been trying to define community, there is not a clear consensus, though many agree that there must be a sense of community (SOC). In general term it is the result experiences of living as a community, SOC is not attached to a specific space but rather to the individuals connections and exchange, this can be given when there is a common interest or purpose (Blanchard and Markus 2002b). To clarify, not all aggrupations of people are communities; due that they may lack the SOC. To the term community be applied to associations, must include common values, trust and intimacy in some cases among he members (Varisco, 2010). Sense of community is described as the feeling of belonging and the importance of being a member of certain group, as well the needs of each individual must be met through the commitment to stick to the group as a member (McMillan and Chavis 1986); an organization or service is not enough to create a community, members are moved to form communities when they find a purpose that passionate them (Desai and Wolf, 2014).

The online environments created for racial or ethnic groups, are essential spaces to keep the communication and the sense of community in a globalized world, although this “communities” go beyond the geographical borders (Mainsah, 2014). Same as real communities share some characteristics like emotional connections, support or commitment (Norman, 2012), or in a more normative way protect the moral codes,

keep the similarity, same identity and purpose, maintain and delimitate what or who is part of the community (Kong, 2011), those which are formed online also maintain some of this features however, are not express in the same way.

In real geographic space, members of a neighborhood may form a community although they might live far or outside of the neighborhood, however may share support. This means that a neighborhood may be labeled community when it is shared the sense of community, it means feelings and behaviors; groups of people does not mean that they live as community (Blanchard and Markus 2002) a characteristic of group behavior is the likeness, members reproduce tendency to like similarity sticking to it or trying to be like (Anderson, 2009).

The characteristics of sense of community in real geographic can be applied to virtual communities, scholars point the difference between a neighborhood or settlement, and a community, meanwhile the first type is a group with no affections, these can be measured or defined by their behavior, being: interaction, public communication, activeness of members and finally continuous participation, but a virtual community requires affective bonds (Blanchard and Markus 2002), a settlement only can be a community if it has the feeling of being a community or behaves as such, authors propose that may be some similarities with the virtual environments (Blanchard and Markus 2002b), virtual groups are formed by people who share the same purpose, work as a network using internet or specific website to exchange information or experiences (Norman, 2012). Although real and online communities may share some qualities it does not mean that they are the same, because the ones on Internet have new resources and they lack of the closeness, and the interactions are more impersonal and information seeking (Memmi, 2006) in the same line, the low number of interactions, members, replies (quality) and immediacy, and the fact that many join these spaces with the purpose of information seeking the interaction is almost forced and unnatural, is linked to an intellectual need, at the same time the conversations held online are temporal and in few circumstances led to a replacement of the real aggrupations (Kong, 2001)

Initially e-spaces were launched aiming to build communities mainly by interest or around services or product aiming to connect people, however, in the last ten years this has been focused in make profitable the connectivity among people or things. In the same way the goal changes the spaces did it, they passed from being plane and textual to be more interactive, where users could express and connect through a narrative while they express themselves (Van Dijck, 2013)

2.3.1. Type of communities

In sociology it is important to use the classification made by Ferdinand Tonnies to classify communities, he found two types Gemeinschaft (Community) and Gesellschaft (society).

The term Gemeinschaft means that the members are working toward the common well. There are settled rules and behaviors, and a shared responsibility and goal, the relations are strong and simple structures; there is a loyalty by the members to the group (Tonnies, 2001). These type of communities are characterized by strong personal ties, usually they are small and stable within a specific location being a town, family, etc., where relations are one-to-one however are inflexible to change, as consequence a clear definition of their culture may be easily identify (Memmi, 2006), in this category religious communities fit pretty well.

Gesellschaft association types, can be found in modern societies, this type of communities are maintained by the individual interest, where functions or roles locate the social status lacking of personal relations, being these, temporal and practical (Memmi, 2006). For instance, business fit in this category where workers are in a system of production but each of them have their own interest, the relations are more loose an flexible, however the loyalty is lower, their social structures are vulnerable to class, racial or ethnical issues as well as to the psychological insecurity and loneliness, this type of association have weak ties where the exchanges are done by the specific need of each person rather than the association (Tonnies, 2001; Memmi, 2006).

In simpler words, Gemeinschaft associations are homogeneous having similar characteristics among members and Gesellschaft ones are heterogeneous where members are far different to each other (Pan, Lu and Gupta, 2014). For researchers, Gesellschaft groups can be better analyzed if its structure is observed and a network analysis may give more accurate results (Memmi, 2006).

The types of links that are built in the different societies to understand how the group is interacting, sociologically there are two types of personal connections (or ties) between people: weak and strong ties. Below a general scheme, which can be better understood by the follow definition of weak and strong ties.

Table 1: *Strong and Weak Ties*

Solidarity-seeking	Information-seeking
Strong ties	Weak ties
Nodes	Links
Info-redundant	Info-discriminant
Ritual	Signal
Affirmation	Information

Reference: Anderson, 2009

The strong ties are present in specific groups, which are fairly small formed by family and friends; members know each other personally. Thus, communication is recurrent, direct and face-to-face, giving in some cases as result emotional connections and established solidarity, in this type of groups the information is low and mainly redundant (Memmi, 2006; Anderson, 2009), these types of ties are frequently found in Gemeinschaft communities.

The recent improvement of social networks opened new forms for interactions, the connectivity increased as well as the develop of society construction based on the real already established relationships, as relations get improved; a flexibility of links and weak ties surged (Van Dijck, 2013).

When aggrupations are found, they can be differentiated as reference groups or communities of practice, the first one, lacks of identity and boundaries, they only share similarity between the members (Anderson, 2013). Both type of aggrupations share that they support a new model of networks and nodes; where connections are called the weak ties, which are present often in Gesellschaft or what is know now as communities of practice, members a high differentiation among them respect to information, where interactions are mainly done by an interest or need, this ties are usually the friends of friends or acquaintances, whose a specific information cannot be found out of the first circle of the strong ties due that in that community the information shared is similar, thus, all members know the same (Anderson, 2009; 2013). Basically, some reference groups, becomes communities of practices thanks to the exchange of learning through the weak ties, then they become public spaces where the focus in on the practices which finally become them communities. As for the members, these phases shape their personal representation within the group, through interactions it is transformed into a community of practice, which at the last stage, there is a materialization of the practices, which are assumed by the publics (Anderson, 2013).

Between the formed communities two phenomena can be seen the mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity (Memmi, 2006). The mechanical solidarity is found easier in Gemeinschaft aggrupations where the members are highly similar and linked making dense groups; they are characterized by the frequent interaction and contact between the members, emotional involvement and the solidarity.

Meanwhile, the organic solidarity is present in contemporary or Gesellschaft communities, which are flexible and heterogeneous in its forms, in these type of aggrupations needs are filled when members complement each other thanks to their different roles rather than relationships, there is a lack of emotionality, in these type of aggrupations the ties are weak and spontaneous and rarely form communities however, the most important here is the flow of new information (Memmi, 2006).

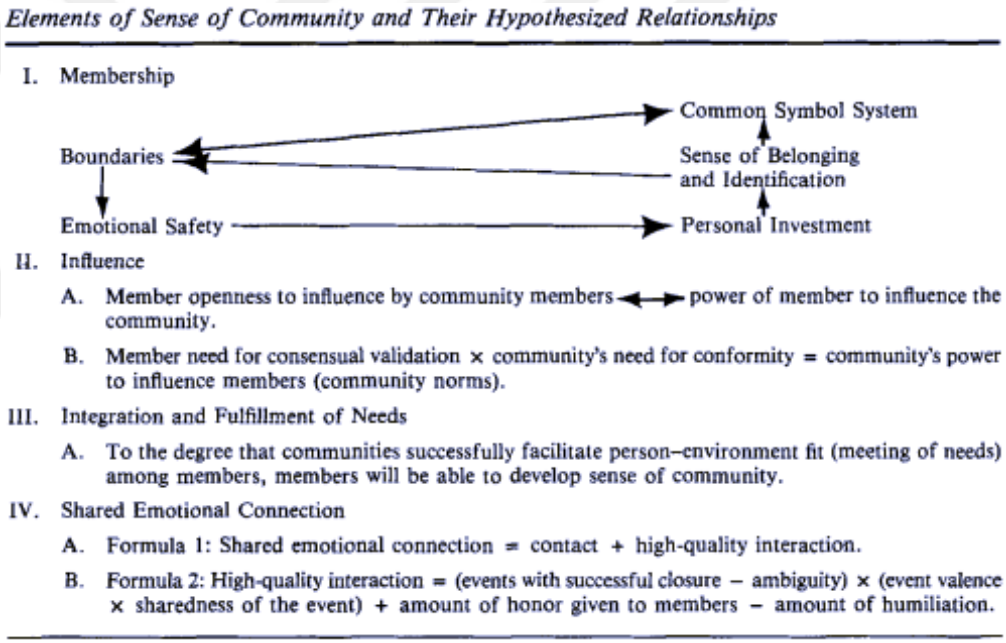
Gesellschaft communities, are more popular now-a-days due that people's habits has changed, the identities do not change but the linking, memberships and information profiles are weak and re-presented as far as the humans join new groups or communities in offline and online spaces, where modern society is not a media but a network, a single person can belong to many of them but could not fully identify his/herself to a one only and attach exclusively to one flowing freely by different spaces (Anderson, 2008; Memmi, 2006). The Gesellschafters are wide social engaged but links are temporal and objective, this is dominant in the urban upper-class, they are freer and move between different groups according to their needs (Memmi, 2006).

Virtual communities are likely Gesellschaft style; publications or conversations on the walls are used as a kind of tool to reach information. The participants' work and post for objectives not looking to deep human relationships, the sources of information are so much less relevant than the results on the common conversations or activities (Memmi, 2006). As result of this, in the online environments strong ties are not easy found, for those, the circumstances must be very specific, like being a small community where members have similar background and social status, and same aims, members also should spend well enough time on the e-space together to tight the ties otherwise is hard to build closeness and SOC (Memmi, 2006).

In the sociology sciences, it is known that information usually moves from the strong ties to the weak ties, (Anderson, 2013), within this two type of ties there is individual agency and what is called the wisdom of the crows, from strong ties there is a transference of solidarity, meanwhile on the weak ties there is a flux of information, members then become nodes linked by certain objectives, activities and roles (Anderson, 2009), this pattern can also be perceived in the blogs where public networks are established surrounding the first circles of relationships extending to others or unknown publics (Anderson, 2009).

2.3.2. Sense of community

For this thesis is key to identify what are the characteristics of a community to feel as such, as mentioned before settlements are more focus to a personal interest, while communities need the sense of community, although both may share interests, borders, and other characteristics. Members of a group should feel that among them relation and emotions as part of their sense of belonging to the space, this can be constructed in virtual environments due that provide lot of information and quality experiences (Hjarvard, 2006).



Elements of Sense of Community and Their Hypothesized Relationships

I. Membership

Boundaries ↔ Common Symbol System

Boundaries → Emotional Safety

Sense of Belonging and Identification → Boundaries

Sense of Belonging and Identification → Personal Investment

II. Influence

A. Member openness to influence by community members ↔ power of member to influence the community.

B. Member need for consensual validation × community's need for conformity = community's power to influence members (community norms).

III. Integration and Fulfillment of Needs

A. To the degree that communities successfully facilitate person–environment fit (meeting of needs) among members, members will be able to develop sense of community.

IV. Shared Emotional Connection

A. Formula 1: Shared emotional connection = contact + high-quality interaction.

B. Formula 2: High-quality interaction = (events with successful closure − ambiguity) × (event valence × sharedness of the event) + amount of honor given to members − amount of humiliation.

Figure 1: *Elements of SOC and Their Hypothesized Relationships*

Reference: McMillan and Chavis, 1986

Sense of community (SOC) is define as "a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith the members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together" (McMillan and Chavis, 1986) however the SOC is particular for each community according to their needs, behaviors and characteristics.

It is important to underline that the model presented by McMillan and Chavis have not been testes as a whole, when some of it was tested there were different result or no results at all, despite that the entire model have not been substituted (Blanchard and Markus, 2002).

According to McMillan and Chavis (1986) the SOC is developed in four ways:

- **Feeling of membership:** feelings of belonging to the space, identifying with and borders of, the community; safety from/to members and about content; personal investment and reward, common symbol and language system.
- **Feelings of influence:** feelings of having influence on, and being influenced by, the community, as well the maintenance of the norms established.
- **Integration and fulfillment of needs:** feelings of being supported by others, meeting the needs of all members, having a reward for belonging to the group and having a status, have a role or function in the group.
- **Shared emotional connection:** feelings of relationships, develop continue high quality interaction, shared history and crisis, shared values, honor / humiliation for the members and a "spirit" of community.

Despite of this mentioned characteristics not all physical settlements can be labeled as communities, due that only few of them shared feelings of belonging and attachment (Blanchard and Markus, 2002b).

The sense of belonging in the communities is very important, to satisfy two need of humans: first, to try to establish and maintain strong relations, and second, keep their individuality as differentiator factor. People fill these needs choosing changeable identities in the groups they participate seeking acceptation, however, if members

resemble too much to each-others, will loose their uniqueness and the fulfillment of this need will not be accomplished (Pan, Lu and Gupta, 2014).

2.3.3. Sense of virtual community

Similar to SOC there is a sense of virtual community (SOVC) that is the shared characteristics of both types of communities with slight modifications. The SOVC is described like the behaviors and feelings from and toward the community and its members, or simplified the experienced sense of community (Blanchard and Markus 2002). In the same way that geographic settlement becomes communities, virtual settlements that have the characteristics of a community such as boundaries, symbols, support, etc. may convert into a virtual community (Blanchard and Markus, 2002). If one want to differentiate between a virtual settlement and a virtual community should watch in detail the personal relations built with strangers by this media and the experiences shared (Blanchard and Markus, 2002).

The SOC on geographic settlements is not always given; in fact some people have their own personal communities, which members are outside of the borders of the settlement, fulfilling gaps who provide support in the whole sense (Blanchard and Markus 2002b), similar to virtual communities dispersed by distances, not always relationships produce sense of community. The fulfillment in geographic communities allow members to feel a high degree of commitment and increase their participation by imitating other and avoiding crises (Blanchard and Markus 2002), the recognition of others by members of the community as well as the camaraderie shown in the group is a indicator of longevity in the place.

This type of religious spaces allow the construction of the identity through the interaction with others using similarity and difference, this virtual spaces let to members the discussions and conversations with others to built their own identity (Marcotte, 2010). The identity of the group is strong related to their needs or problems rather than the geographic place itself, they own a virtual space based on interests acquiring value due that the common well is over the person (Desai and Wolf, 2014).

In e-spaces reference groups are established around already established relationships like friends and family, for example a blog, with characteristic behaviors they move into events or (communities of) practices (Anderson, 2013), it has been found in empirical works that some of these behaviors are currently membership and influence, in which borders, symbols, norms, support, and relations or emotions are part of them (Blanchard and Markus 2002).

When groups or communities are observed specially on internet, a possible mimetization can be given by the member with the right use of language, behavior and clothing (Derrickson, 2008) regarding to identification and recognition for researchers. There is always a struggle among the authenticity of the members; this can be interpreted as inclusion or exclusion being a kind of racism or stratification, for religious and in this case Islamic environments names do not define who is or not Muslim, as far as anyone can use an Arabic name and fake an identity specially in discussions groups (Larsson, 2005). It is impossible to be 100% sure about the members' identity due to the hard verification; anyone could change from his/her name to gender (Piela, 2013).

The creation of identities which are not real, difficult the production of trust, which is an incessant problem in communities online (Blanchard and Markus, 2002). This issue is not only perceived among those who belong long time ago to the group, but also for the new ones. The identification between and of the members is not only how they see others, but also rather how they see themselves in the group, the investment to express and show themselves one-to-another. This process is the social identification which can be perceive at first stages in the new participants who attempt to have a sense of belonging, adapting themselves to the specifics of the group self-including themselves (Pan, Lu and Gupta, 2014). The sense of identity is strengthened online when members share interest and connection with the people of the space, as well relationships, constructive experiences and preference for the community, the care for each one of the members, creates emotional links which may be developed into strong ties, that finally end up becoming commitment for the participants and the

group, increasing benefit and participation in the virtual environment (Pan, Lu and Gupta, 2014).

When SOV was applied to virtual communities a similarity was found like in geographic based communities, settlements that are virtual may lack characteristics of sense of community like sense of belonging, trust, etc. below can be found how sense of virtual communities is developed. (Blanchard and Markus, 2002)

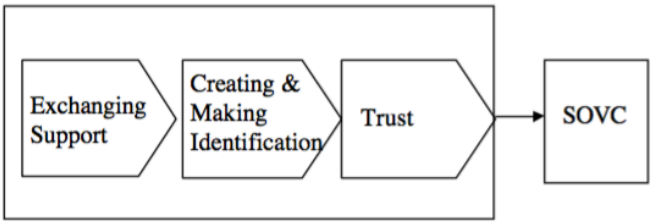


Figure 2: *SOVC Development*

Reference: Blanchard and Markus, 2002.

Users tend to believe that their groups are communities however not always is truth. It was found that such feeling is highly related to participation, members of communities found the below characteristics as indicators of community (Blanchard and Markus, 2002):

- **Recognition:** Members recognize other members
- **Identification:** Members create their own identity by their interactions while identify others' identity.
- **Support:** Members give value to emotional support; however is not the most given or important. The exchange of support is mainly of information and the public sharing benefits all members.
- **Relationship:** In some cases members reach personal contact developing relationships in private conversation; these relations may be perceived by

other members in the online environments that are seen as an important part of the community.

- **Emotional attachment:** The attachment varies from member to member. Those who are more active feel themselves more attached to the group as well as those who are more benefited from it.
- **Obligation:** Is felt as the members participate, for instance leader have a higher feeling of obligation than lurkers.

Although feelings of influence can be perceived in face-to-face communities, in a virtual community not always is perceived as part of the sense of community, the reason is believe to be that participant have clear knowledge of the internal rules (Blanchard and Markus, 2002). The sense of virtual community can be perceived in virtual settlements when there are constant interactions that maintain it (Blanchard and Markus, 2002).

As for the offline communities, the sense of virtual communities is changeable according to events and the members themselves, it may decline, improve or even disappear (Blanchard and Markus, 2002). Virtual settlements cannot be forced to become virtual communities, the sense of belonging must be present to be community despite of interests or aims, then the aims reinforce that sense, that is why many commercial communities fail, because there is a lot control over the space and interactions, the sense of community is lost and the business purpose is finally revealed (Blanchard and Markus, 2002).

Table 2: *Comparison of SOC and SOVC*

Comparison of SOC and SOVC.	
McMillan and Chavis' Dimensions of SOC	**MSN's Dimensions of SOVC**
Feelings of membership	Recognition of members
Feelings of influence	
Integration and fulfillment of needs	Exchange of support

Shared emotional connection	-Attachment -Obligation
	-Self identification and identification of the others
	Relationship with specific members

Reference: Blanchard and Markus, 2002

Virtual communities not only share interests but also similar behaviors and develop the group as a whole in a continuous process, what means that real virtual communities need a high degree of involvement by the member due that inclusion and engagement are deeply related (Blanchard and Markus, 2002).

2.3.4. Minorities online

In some cases virtual communities can become neat cyber-picture of traditional communities, in fact many communities as family or friends get into the Internet aiming to communicate but yet maintaining their offline essence (Memmi, 2006).

For immigrant online, in the case of this thesis minority, two spheres are shaping the development of the communities, one is the reality of the place where they live now, and the other is the appropriation of the culture (being given by their parents or their new religion), (Mainsah, 2014).

Internet attracted many types of audiences that otherwise could meet, the areas given only pretend to create strong ties and close communities which member would meet in person in a future (Memmi, 2006), kinds of unusual people such as minorities who try to find their own space in a no-borders campus, although many studies has forgotten the use of internet by the minorities in the recent time it seems that modern academics became interested by the internet as well as more new unusual audiences started to use it as a source of information (Mishra and Semaan, 2010). For instance, those Muslims living in non-Muslim countries the geographic are temporal in the

sense that they seek to return to their country of origin where the ties (social, economical, etc.) are kept (Grillo, 2004).

The immigration processes and minorities are important because they open new spaces of socialization, or even hybridization through Internet, this became a new field between their own culture and the one adopted, they also work always as a connection between the past that immigrants lived in their homeland, and the future they expect to have when they are back, or in other contexts of what people is and what they want to be or achieve. What can be considered for immigrants as an ethnic problem like discrimination (being, black, Islamic, and others) however, in Internet becomes key to join larger aggrupations which share the same feeling, all this is possible thanks to the interchange through messages, spaces and content (Mainsah, 2014).

However, the imaginary construction of a space by this type of populations, is based on what actually are or were their homes and what they imagine that are now, causing a gap in-between with a big breach (Vasquez, 2008) where the individual can position him/herself in this imaginary space but not in the real ground. This can play a role in the identities of those who encounter two nations and are less defined in the cyberspaces than in real society, because the space gives the opportunity to renegotiate everything, from social status to gender, some members use their performance and create plan according to their statues or the one they want to reach in the space (Memmi, 2006). Internet works a medium to show and there is major trend for self-representation, due that the space make it more acceptable (Anderson, 1997). In this way a presence of competition for status may be found. This type of transaction emphasizes the third space as a whole experience (Mainsah, 2014).

Third spaces are not real locations with specific characteristics, conversely they are incongruent or mixed giving less important to its origins and focusing in the result with its own new stories, borders, authority and policies which is and must be seen as a novelty, where everything must be reconsidered in both significance and representation (Hughey, 2008).

The difference with normal groups and third spaces is that the last one has in common the tradition and pretend to be a geographic imaginary space (Vasquez, 2008), these spaces online not only display culture but also encounter one-and-other producing a struggle for dominance or power, however, this type of situation and the spaces themselves are not given in offline world (Mainsah, 2014).

Thanks to internet there is a redefinition through the time of the spaces and their characteristics and frontiers, e-spaces can be seen as sources of information for the third spaces (or diasporas) due that there is an interaction of society and culture regardless time and space, immigrant find in these areas as a created space to where they belong and can share a wide range of material (images, music, history, ideas, politics, religion, etc.) (Mainsah, 2014). Regarding to the social groups these are more simple, are focused to collaboration, advice and in some cases influence (Memmi, 2006), another advantage of the third spaces is that are not limited to an specific space being family or job, so this allow people to get along with various types of people and circles more keenly (Marcotte, 2010).

The third spaces mediate the performance between two communities where there is mediation between the two communities, where the identities are real and there is a re-construction of authority in virtual communities (Hughey, 2008). The third spaces can be divide in two: one which seems to be integrate so the society with an interracially and ethnicity, and other which seems to be more hermetic keeping values and precepts of the previous nation or state (Grillo, 2004).

E-spaces which are depicted as ethnics could be divided in two, firsts, those in which member aim to legitimize their needs and behavior, or second, are the identities that resulted of interactions and the spaces in maintain as a gathering places merely (Hughey, 2008).

The habits adopted may be temporal or permanent phenomena; in anyway those may be always changed. The new spaces allow the meeting of new cultures and produce new meanings of culture outside of them too. For instance Facebook represent

a great space for expression, traditional websites only allowed one-way communication so advocacy or activism was completely impossible if the space was not owned by the person who wanted to react or interact, in fact interaction was only possible by email or chat (which mainly remained private). However spaces as Facebook keep the members informed and at the same time help to maintain the sense of community not only in a organizational level but also at personal one (Osler, 2014), allowing the possibility not only of private interaction but more interesting yet: public, where one or more individuals can post not only texts, and expressed their own ideas regardless of organizations' positions, giving as result two-ways communication (Desai and Wolf, 2014).

There are trendy as new "communities" accessible to the public with special characteristics like the freedom and lack of rules and hierarchies (Kong, 2011), however, the freedom in this kind of spaces is not completely open to all in all forms because yet members can set their own rules having self-control what is contradictory to the abundance of freedom (Hughey, 2008).

Although e-spaces represent a great form of communication for organizations, but in some cases the sense of community and the conversations can be ignored due to a bad manage and the misuse of the options given by this platforms (Desai and Wolf, 2014). When a spaces lacks of interaction, or those are rarely or there are not at all, cannot be called community, those cannot be formed if there is not commitment by the managers to incentive member to participate and achieve a real engagement. Communities online can be considered as existent as long as the participants are willing to engage with interactions and keep relations long and strong enough to involve personal feelings on the e-space (Kong, 2011). For new member it is hard to get stick to the homogenous crowd, as they come from different backgrounds and dynamics, and are not familiar to the processes on the core (Pan, Lu and Gupta, 2014).

Communities with differences are fine in the since that they can fulfill the different need of all participants, for new members join the community may be permeated by uncertainty and shyness, the newcomers want to resemble to the other

members without losing their uniqueness, but this only can be overcome once they are fully included in the community, even when new participants want to fit in the new space and try to blend with others, members may be differentiate by three factors: biological characteristics (age, gender, etc.), information (knowledge and experience) and value (motivation, principles, etc.), (Pan, Lu and Gupta, 2014).

The struggle for dominance among religious aggrupations on the internet leads to the definition of identity not only of each member but also the group as a whole, the accesses to this leadership now are not limited only to knowledge or resources but to new factors (Kong, 2001). They easy-fast access to tools and knowledge make a huge change in the hierarchy within these communities.

The diversity of languages (rather than idioms: expressions) and multi-communication is important at the time of exchange between environments and communities. (Mainsah, 2014). Virtual spaces are mainly maintain by interactions and communication, if well user may be speaking the same language, a codification or sublanguage can be managed, for instance some users may use symbols or emoticons to express themselves, while others may be use different languages in order to limit the information to certain public (Mainsah, 2014) this are manners to shape and plan communication between online groups, even in some cases the use of language can determinate the expertise of a member or his/her longevity in the space.

The fact that almost the majority of communication is textual, it may represent and advantage in the sense that there is a lapse of time to answer, messages are straight and are not permeated with gestural language, in the other side, it carries a disadvantage too, like the lack of expressions and emphasize with the tone, etc. these are details that can make clearer the message or in other way mislead it. (Memmi, 2006).

For a community to achieve good results this must change the approach of its communications, the behavior of the a mediator agent, targeting sense of community, engagement and empowerment are more efficient than try to control and build

reputation, those will be the result of the implementation of previous settled purposes (Desai and Wolf, 2014), communities may be created around services, products or interest, the support, advocacy and strong rations among the participants.

It is very significant for academics and practitioners of communications to keep in mind the contexts and relation between off-line and on-line spaces used by immigrant as well the effects of these into their lives' vision. (Mainsah, 2014).

It is important to point the relation between migrations and religions through the times, specially when religions have caused the redefinition of territory and borders, some of them calling themselves as nation or state for instance Jewish (Israel). (Vasquez, 2008).

In todays world, religions are not static they became the source and the channel, being part of the migratory processes and outcomes, devotees establishes social relations in both the place where they come from as the place for were they live, being create this, transnational networks which go beyond countries, cultures and politics are built, and immigrants start to take part in processes in 2 or more nations. (Vasquez, 2008).

Spaces in social networks are not properly "religious" but they have became a gate to belief expression, when a member with traditional values start to move out from their countries they found internet not only to keep together but also an space to talk and discuss their experiences and concerns about the encounter between new environment and their traditions or faiths, getting a feeling of community through the cyberspace (Helland, 2007).

2.3.5. Religious communities online

The recent high connectivity is a game changer of the personal and community religious practices (Shayon and Cox, 1994). Internet users have passed

all aspects of their life to the web, including their religions exchanging experiences and beliefs through messages and responses (Helland, 2007), this made that religious communities start to have a virtual space too, with the help of social networks took out religion from its actual location to Internet where the no limitations is its main power to move and conquer (Vasquez, 2008).

Offline and online communities can be compared because they share some or many characteristics, these have a durability, are established but the relations in some cases are replaced by links, and are reinforce by the common experience. If well, the religious spaces are networks with nodes, they are built through the digitalization of the rituals or practices as well as the cyber-missionaries in the imagined third space (Vasquez, 2008). It is though that a description of religion is needed for politics and publics to understand and interpret how religion interacts with the context (social, political and culture) and lastly, it is important to understand how religion and media are affect one to other (hoover, 2008), the religious discussions have been limited by politics in multicultural societies, however, internet and allow a new political sphere (Kong, 2001). Regarding to this, there is few publication about religion in Internet that contemplates how cyberspaces has effected it (Mishra and Semaan, 2010) and in fact the hypothesis of the direct effect of media on religion and its rituals is supported (Armfiel and Holbert, 2003).

For this work it is important to see that Islamic communities in Latin America are mostly minorities formed by locals and immigrants, some research argument that these spaces for information exchange offer a great opportunity for immigrants to keep in touch with their traditional religions (Mishra and Semaan, 2010). Religious communities with non-traditional dogmas are found on Internet, having regular meetings based only on the virtual interaction (O'leary, 1996), religious studies and prayers in chat rooms are fund in Internet. For some users of these sites the creation of these religious spaces may be given thanks to a superior power, however, their practices are as valid and equal as in the real life is questionable, in fact participant may expose their real feelings and thoughts

through internet, but in some cases again, these may be perceive as a metaphysical response; for instance influenced by the evil side (Kong, 2001).

One of the interesting phenomena on multicultural or multi-religious environments is that human beings own different positions and environments where their identities are negotiated all the time, for instance being a woman, a Muslim, a Latino, etc., aiming to have one's identity, and the one of being with different collectives, have as result cultural innovation and mixture. An example of this are the religions which transcend the border settling down in a new space, having their own configurations and position with the new space still keeping relations with their old home (Vasquez, 2008). Persons develop different identities (local or religious) through new spaces where previous values are encountered with different ones and new environment.

In the new space, there is an expansion to the virtual not only of religions but also of their rituals. When it comes to rituals on internet, or even a simple conversation, what used to be symbolic or tools for believers, can be easily replaced by words, drawings, pictures or emoticons, the lack of real presence of the object or word do not invalidate the ceremony (O'leary, 1996). It is very important the presence or ritual in the aggrupation due that these help to the group to keep united, also it strengths and renew the links built among the members (Kong, 2001). Social networks made an extension of the rituals, if well, not all of them may seen possible like praying, these spaces open discussions about them, giving access to those who ignore the topic or have not participated in those, also for new believers, it eases the adaptation due that many of them use it as a filter to avoid uncomfortable satiation like being judge for their incorrect behavior or previous beliefs (Osler, 2014).

The reality of the virtual ritual performed by pagan (and non-pagan) communities online is formed through computer systems, which is seen as strange or even invalid for those who only accept the traditional presence way and using real objects to carrying out a ritual (O'Leary, 1996), despite so, the validity in most of the cases end up in the hand of the performing, any act online may be

considered as real as the value given to it, due that its efficacy lays on the sincerity of the devotee (O'Leary, 1996). Academics are trying to find a point between the Islamic and the laic of these rituals (Grillo, 2004). In the spaces the subjects may be deep or merely shallow, they may also lack actualization, as well as who is the real (or targeted) audience? However, the topics managed in the e-spaces use to be the same as for the offline or traditional worshippers, being: meaning of the scriptures, homosexuality, prayers for a special member or situation as well as questions regarding to faith (O'Leary, 1996). Transmission or religious events like weddings or funerals deepen the emotional ties between community and the members; these memories are part of what is called a collective memory (Hjarvard, 2006).

2.3.5.1. Muslim communities in Internet

Islam became transnational trespassing the borders and emphasizing the concept of Ummah, which means the Islamic community or nation despite of the physical place of origin (Grillo, 2004). When relations are formed in real spaces people are keen to know each other better and maximize relations due to the short distances, however, Muslims get online and form what is called the virtual Ummah despite the borders, which is a network of links (followers in this case) that are maybe not allowed in the same dimension in a reality due to time-space limitations, internet contrary allows and empower the way Muslims get along each other and idealize their community (Varisco, 2010). Internet is seen as a religious space for Muslims as far as they can contact to each other and share their experiences giving as result a possible sense of community (Ayala, 2011). The spaces online also allow them to communicate with broader or remote Islamic communities around the globe (Mishra and Semaan, 2010). There is a fast connection between filigrees around the globe since Islamic communities have been characterized by the unity; nonetheless, this is virtually possible always when Internet and language be available (Varisco, 2010).

The importance of congregations is to support the beliefs and normativity of their members, as a group they have the same faith and share values and principles, which is important to reach their goals not only at the religious level but also at the personal one giving special meaning to the whole experience, (Helland, 2007). It is seen the internet as a opportunity to improve the sense of community and identity especially for the Islamic ones, due that some of them use the space for promotion and sale, as well as, exclusive religious content for members and in some cases promoting interaction among them (Chawki, 2010). Internet allows a safe space for marginalized Muslims. (Varisco, 2010 pp.163)**.**

Muslims users of e-spaces may seen as agent who "localizing the global" (Marcotte, 2010), for instance, first and second generations of Muslim immigrants do not discern from what is religion and what is culture the cultures of their country. For instance in United States south-Asian Muslim immigrants insist to their parents to differentiate between religion and culture (Mishra and Semaan, 2010). There is a tendency to delimitate the Islam of certain places (Islam of "country") and Islam in specific place, the first means the mixture of traditions of the country with the Islam, a domestication or appropriation of the religion, meanwhile Islam in, means the income of an Islam sieved with all the cultural background of the country of origin (Grillo, 2004). What is interesting about the Islamic communities from non-Islamic background in the west is the peculiarity of carrying their own local culture for instance what is called Spanish Islam (Guerrero, 2011) or the newly "Latino Islam" in a globalized world allowing a new reduce space. The vast numbers of people participating has as result the different opinions and contributions about how to be a Muslim in the west or how to bring Islam to this societies (Anderson, 1997), opening spaces for new debates about identity for instance.

The diversity of the participants do not only represent different personalities but also perspectives and ways of thinking about the issues managed on the Islamic spaces in non-Arab contexts (Anderson, 1997), it is important to define the type of these

virtual communities as well as their characteristics in order to analyze them and verify is they are virtual communities or not.

2.3.6. Type of members in online communities

Aggrupation members are characterized by their affinities and their position within the group, this can be called role or status, although the structure of virtual environments works as a network more than a pyramid with hierarchies (Anderson, 2008), is noted that in some communities online users show their status by showing off indicators such as properties, memberships, education, etc. (Hughey, 2008). For instance in social role theory, women are more network-oriented having emphasis in relationships and emotions, meanwhile men is more competitive and authoritarian (Pan, Lu and Gupta, 2014). Between virtual communities the types of members are:

- **Leaders:** Are usually but not always, the founders of the group, thus they carry the responsibility of creating public communication in two-ways encouraging participation in the community as well as keeping the rules and aim. Leaders are influential in the group, they are active and key in the activities as well as for the maintenance of the group comparing to other members (Blanchard and Markus, 2002), the information and help given to other members reinforce the feeling of security and trusty environment where all can participate learn and trust from others. (Blanchard and Markus, 2002)
- **Participants:** Participants are those members which post and answer, they are active and have an important degree of interaction, in some cases they might be more active than the leaders, a characteristic of leaders and participant is the participation (Blanchard and Markus, 2002b). They may make reference to stories or members in their public conversations leading to discussions perhaps; some may hint relationship with other members indicating closeness among some members (Blanchard and Markus, 2002b).

- **Lurkers:** The most passive members are the "lurkers"; who read, but never or rarely post. Their participation is merely receptive they conform the largest part of majority of online communities (Bateman, Butler and Gray, 2011).

If well, these are three big categories members may feel different degree of participation within them, almost reaching superior or inferior levels, like being participant but with a very low participation in public, or being a lurker with high participation in private (Blanchard and Markus, 2002)

2.3.7. Interactions

The tools offered by new media allow to users to read the messages despite the time when were written (Blanchard and Markus, 2002). The messages or post in a virtual community may be public, which are those that can be seen by all the members, in the case of spaces such as Facebook the wall; or private, which are send directly to an specific member through messages, chat or email (Blanchard and Markus, 2002) in both cases messages are not held by time unless in the public space those be deleted.

The interactions between members and community are very important since members can be active by participating in the public activities of the group however these type of actions do not assurance the reception by the rest of the members (Norman, 2012), a member may feel part of the community once when there is not difference between one member and other in the sense of belonging but can perceive a difference between his/her group and others' group.

The usage of public or private messages may determinate how information flows and is used as well as the self-representation, the privacy or publicity of the issues or interactions online may not always be perceived as positive, in fact it may lead to a re-presentation of many factors that can affect the community like security and vulnerability (Norman, 2012), there must be a clear separation between the self and the

other, public and private, in communities where there are extract rules about the interaction between members, private contact may result as a problem or foul to the norms.

A stable participation and interaction may be confused with leadership (Blanchard and Markus, 2002), which may be wrong. However, the high exchange of interaction and support emphasize the SOVC as well as reinforce ties and commitment on the members (Blanchard and Markus, 2002).

2.3.8. Maintenance

The characteristic of the SOC are well-known, although not always is given in the same way in all communities, if well, its three big features are the influence, support and emotional connection, how it is born and is conserved yet lack of knowledge and research (Blanchard and Markus, 2002).

For academics rather than post and messages, what it is really important is how the behaviors are formed and preserved in long terms. (Blanchard and Markus, 2002). In virtual communities the SOC can be self-sustaining without any effort in some cases due to the engagement of the members; however this may decrease to a point to disappear completely, leaving as result a bunch of people in a dead space if member stop to behave-like, leaders give up and a new wave of members with new perspective come in (Blanchard and Markus, 2002b). Lack of interest, participation, disagreements and other factor may exterminate any feeling of community. To avoid the loss of SOV, researchers found three factors that help to maintain the sense of virtual communities, exchanging support, creating identities and making identifications, and production of trust (Blanchard and Markus, 2002):

- **Exchanging support:** It is important for all the members to perceive publicly support in both emotional and information fields, this gives the sense that member's needs are met. The emotional support is important for

members as a proof of strong ties and personal relations despite of the sense of vitality.

- **Creating identities and making identifications**: it was found that members believe that through their posting their shape their identities as well as the others', they also could identify other members through their tone, messages and opinions, even though many of the members use pseudonymous and fake images to represent themselves on profiles they get recognized by their participations establishing ties and obligation in the community.
- **The production of trust**. If well, many member use their real information which can be perceive by the members, when it is about relations on internet there is always the doubt of how real and true is all about other participants, in some communities the process of trustiness is given by previous encounters in real life despite the relation these people may have, these previous meetings can be perceive in the way and in the information members share on the space. Although in some cases the trustiness may come from offline environments not always occur in such way, but the opposite, the constant online interaction may lead to offline relationships, which both can be seen by other members on the e-space (Blanchard and Markus, 2002).

Although in real communities these features are given and in some cases maintain naturally, in virtual communities leaders are an important element to perform activities which can maintain the SOVC, it is important to point that these three elements are strong related.

The Community Relation Management (CoRM) the way people communicate through a community where they share something that may be of interest for example, below an adaptation of the model presented by Ang Lawrence to social media (people communicating to people), (Ang, 2010):

- **Connectivity:** Refers to the invitation done by and to friends, the level of intimacy created by the personal networking of each member. One member's friends are now other member friends. Identify other possible space to extend the network, to keep contact with members aiming to improve and develop the space creating loyalty.
- **Conversations:** Given in newsfeed, wall, updates of detailed information (place, time, etc.), preferences, status, activities, etc. Conversations help to identify what people like (through reviews and comments), follow up the topics, and what is said about the organization, positive and negative. In conversations is important to answer within the first 24 hours.
- **Content creation:** May be about good experiences, or bad. Create and share, is an opportunity to show off, create conversations through topics and fuelling them. Promote and identify the contents that are preferred by the community and explode them. Invite members to create and spread content.
- **Collaboration:** Platform allows multi-user participation, contribution, cooperation and alliances. Identify who are the strategic leaders in the community, use the space as a low cost broadcast medium, generate positional value rather than economic and increase the visibility of the space (Ang, 2010).

2.3.9. Similar previous papers

The literature was gathered using the keywords "Islam in internet", "virtual communities", "religion online", "Muslims online", "Islamic communities in Internet", "Muslims communities online" and similar.

Similar studies have been carried out in the field of anthropology and communication observing the presence of Muslim or religion in Internet; even today Internet is seen as a source of knowledge for the Islamic communities in Europe (Šisler, 2007). Below those works which were found will be mentioned.

Varisco (2009) worked on the Islamic presence mainly in blogs, he start mentioning how Islam was from the beginning in the internet thanks to the uploading of materials to the web and how all this information is not oversight giving some kind of freedom. The use of internet it is not seen as forbidden Islamic talking as far as it may spread information and unify the different Muslims around the world (as long as they have internet access) but its messages and background may seen as a problem. Other issue mentioned by the author is the fact that not all habitant of Arab countries are Muslims and vice-versa, thus it is difficult to measure their real presence. Regarding to the blogs, Varisco emphasizes in how deep or shallow blogs content may be, how their lack/continuity updates and the audience are important in the blogosphere. Some of the top-listed blogs are described by the author as diaries, archives with video sermons, collections of poetry, musings, artwork and photograph, resumes for commercial purposes and satirist, other blogs seems to be an space for marginalized Muslims as converts, gays or musician, some organization have online presence for this topics for instance the author mention about "eye on Gay Muslims" (http://gaymuslims.org/) which is against of homosexuality in Islam. Alike this topics, Islamic "evangelism" (Dawah) it is also performed online, as well as the anti-Islamic discourse, and the evangelism for Arabs. Although many blogs are related to religious issues the author also does over those associated with political subjects exploring governance surveillance and the cases of Abdelkareem Soliman in Egypt and Seyyed Reza in Iran. The author point out that:

> "Even a cursory view of the blogs readily found indicates that these sites are first and foremost a forum for personal expression with little or no censorship from official institutions. Blogging seems to be especially important for recent converts, particularly those who may not have fellow Muslims nearby. While some older Muslims use blogs to educate or draw attention to past interpretation of doctrinal issues, the trend is for younger Muslims to express their views on multiple subjects, which are not exclusively about religion. I suspect that only a few Muslim blogs have a wide readership and

most are visited mainly by friends or fellow believers within a small personal network" (Varisco, 2010, pp. 167).

Varisco carried on a search in Google in April 2008 for the words "Muslim blog" and "Muslim" and even though high numbers of results were found, the author encounter that the first result was a "moribund site" at that moment leaded to more for-profits purposes. In the results he found Muslims blogs about: commercial aims, family oriented, academic about Islam, reform-minded alternative spaces, converts, women topics and conservative sites, none of them being formal scholars of related to Islamic organizations according to the author. A year later the same search was carried on by the author finding difference in the top position of these sites and even finding new spaces and types of advertising in this time related to Islam. The new top blogs (Mujahideen Ryder, Muslims Wake up and Veiled4allah) are described by the author.

Mark Norman (2014) explores the relation between new media and sports, evaluation a fan-blog (http://www.nucksmisconduct.com/) of a hockey team. He analyzed the blog that is portrayed as a sport bar as a spatial representation and the interactions done by the participants (fans), the sense of belonging and the metaphor of community are also examined. Finally is discussed whether the space is a virtual tribe or community and it is concluded that is neo-tribal. These papers were useful to see how communities online are studied.

On the same line Kavoura (2014) compile in his paper a literature review about how social media may create content for databases and online imagined communities may be formed also in environments like libraries. He explores the new terminology emerging in social media and its different dynamics (posting, liking, sharing, engagement, etc.), finally is concluded that the online imagined communities create their own term, needs, values and symbols, with specific themes and audiences and those maybe be used by librarians to promote their content as well as use these spaces to attract people and the data of these communities can be used to improve the communication for these kind of institutions.

Moving to the topic of community as such and the identity Henry Mainsah (2014) studied the way African Norwegians build identity and sense of belonging using internet as a diaspora, also observed the way this is developed in local and global contexts, and the negotiation given between in both on/offline spaces and in theirs backgrounds (being Norwegian and African descendent), concluding that e-space offers and alternatives for a safe community and self-representation (audience oriented) while boundless networks may be created.

A literature review is done by Lily Kong (2001) in the paper "Religion and technology: Refiguring place, space, identity and community". The author explores different works related to the space and Internet (privatization/secularism, and periphery/center), and the competition to gain adepts; the sense of community and identity (morals, ideals, interactions and its construction) and the performance of rituals on virtual spaces.

Jon W. Anderson (2001) examined the emergent presence of Muslims in internet, he develop his paper into three phases, the first one is the technological adepts, in which the internet has wide the local networks, making easy and faster transfer and search for information. Users have developed new spaces, fostering social network through the internet, a large range of topics and dynamics can be found, for instance, voluntary associations, new uses, expertise and so on, as well as subjects oscillating from Quran to Tafseer (explanation and interpretation of Quran). A "creolization" as the author call it, is given in the Internet, this means that rather than a mixture of languages there is an inter-language instead "a link between two realms of discourse", however there is not regularization of the discourse. The second is making official strategies and activists, where is given as an answer to the first phase. It is understood through the paper that a confrontation between the empiric and the radicalism takes place online especially about what is and what is not Islam, as well as useful information for daily life, as example the launch of al-Azhar in 1999 is cited. The last and third phase is online advent of moderate Islam, here the author speaks about the moderation between opinions, and discourse and life, emphasis is done in the point

that most of Muslims of medium class are active user of internet looking for a balance between tradition and their transnational links, here many Islamic trends and organizations come online to reach this audiences with offers like sheikh online, fatwas, lessons, hadiths and others meanwhile the anonymity of internet allow user to surf in all these types of contents. Finally the author concludes that, the dynamic initiated by engineers have changed not only changing contents but also changing uses and behaviors fostering the creolized discourses and identities, having more performances than paradigms.

Tartoussieh (2011) studied the relationship between media, religion and politics in Egypt within the scope of *digitextuality* (Everett and Caldwell 2003) defined as mixture of old and new media. In the paper it is described how media is used for political purposes, for instance the case of *al-Gama'a* is exposed as an example of the media (entertainment) as a tactical move, in this example The Muslim Brotherhood development is depicted through the life of his founder, the latters would later to attempt to counterattack using the same strategies (producing series). As a result old and new media spaces were created to struggles the over representation for instance the author mentions the videos "we live among you" created in order to show the contributions of the organization to the society. Tartoussieh moves to the topic of Facebook and how it has been use for political reasons (boycotts, demonstrations, etc.) as well as for religion purposes (i.e. http://ikhwanbook.com), blogs and its performance on the political arena are touched. The government surveillance is also shown using the example of the case of the Queen Boat and Raoul and its use of media as a gun against homosexuality alerting and arresting gay people. Finally is concluded that new media can be used to assert cultural right but yet there are limitations regarding to freedom.

Alike, Marcotte (2010) worked on two cyber Islamic environments analyzing the normative discourses presented by Muslims regarding to sexual issues, especially polygamy and homosexuality. Finding that Muslims prefer e-spaces as an alternative for this kind of topics due to the freedom and anonymity and the fact that they are

always vulnerable to change, Muslims are able to express themselves and build identity (myself and the other) insofar they expose their views, opinions, prejudges and so forth, making of the discourse "multivocal and fluid".

Ayala (2011) in her article "Ethnographic Approach to so–called "Sacred" in a Spanish Muslim Digital Environment" made an analysis of the website *WebIslam* from its sections to its contents, basing her research in direct observation and participation plus some interviews with involved people on the website. She found that the space is open to anyone to ask, answer or comment about any topic, also both models or communication horizontal and hierarchical are given on the website and it is related to the fact of knowledgeability within the participants. Ayala noted also that participants feel more comfortable on the virtual space, referring to the forum she mentioned "is the ideal place to ask questions in their mother tongue (Spanish) with the protection offered by the anonymity against potential disapproval or mocking responses" (Ayala, 2011, p.18), the author concludes that internet may be owned for religious purposes like to obtain knowledge as well as having spiritual experiences.

Similar to Ayala, Guerrero (2011) studied Islam in the Spanish public virtual sphere, he treat the fact of glocalization (the impact of the local on the global context), he makes a review of some Islamic organizations in Spain and their presence online (also evaluates their participation) and the production of Islamic content by different authors and in different languages. Finally Guerrero concluded that most of the organizations do not have online presence and those, which have it use the same methods of traditional media focusing in one-way communication (only release information). However the spaces in the Spanish e-Islam sphere "does create a space for a diversity of opinions with a potential for global impact, which were limited to a smaller sphere before these new technologies appeared" (pp. 8).

Other two aspects that should be mentioned are the practice online and Second Life. Although those lasts are more about rituals, Cheryl Casey (2006) depicted how traditional rituals has moved into virtual environments and are performed by people. The author analyzed a virtual church and describes the characteristics of this, including

the fact that people can skip “bored” sections or simply deepen in what is interesting to the adepts through different rituals, the fact that content may be skipped and the importance of who are performing the ceremonies also is reconsidered due to the options offered by internet. It is concluded that Internet provide a rich environment to develop new dynamics and this may reshape how religious rituals are perceive or live it. Likewise, SecondLife has become a space for religious rituals, with virtual mosques offering the option of visiting Islamic sacred places that a normal citizen could not even visit, maybe because the geographic boundaries or financial issue, to the extent that for instance non-Muslims are banned to enter in Mecca, thus many individual has the opportunity not only of vising such places but also to perform virtual pilgrimage in Mecca have assistance and new comers may ask and learn about it (Chawki, 2010).

A deeper analysis was made by Krystina Derrickson (2008) about the Islamic places in SecondLife. In her work she found how iconic Islamic places such as Cordoba Mosque (Spain), Mecca Complex (Saudi Arabia), Alhambra (Spain), Blue Mosque (Turkey) or Hassan II (Morocco) are fully detailed represented in SecondLife (calligraphic, geometric and ornaments are displayed on the Islamic virtual places) and how the sacredness is represented in this virtual environments through behavior norms and codes. For instance is mentioned by the author that some of this virtual mosques in Second Life required to visitors (Muslims and non-Muslims) to take off their shoes and for woman to wear veil during their virtual visit, for rituals like pilgrimage special attires are given to the avatars according to the real Islamic regulations to perform it, this actions are supported by the fact that religion should not be prevented from its practice according to places, it means that people are Muslim in offline and online spaces. Other important issue marked by the author is the fact that, although in Islam human representations are forbidden, avatars in SecondLife represent users, this fact is seen as an extension of clothes according to Derrickson. Regarding to the rituals performed in SecondLife, they are not considered as valid inside Islam, however they may considered as a plus, for instance prayers are supererogatory and pilgrimage is seen as a tool to prepare Muslims before they real pilgrimage. Finally the author concludes that Hajj in Second Life is an educational option for those who are not

Muslims and in normal conditions could never attend hajj as unbelievers, no Muslims certificates, visas, and so on are needed to make it, she raises the question about if these spaces are seen as “real” where are the boundaries? People may confuse reality and simulation or Virtuality is this kind of spaces, although this places are high quality reproduced, is unlikely that these sites would ever represent the sacredness in its totality as the real ones, yet they are seen as an option for who do not have the financial and physical possibility to go to such places and perform the rituals there.

Using these previous studies as a base it is aimed with a rigorous research and analysis to explain the use of Facebook by Latino Muslims communities for interaction at both levels institutional and individual, and the fact that there is not almost existing papers on this subject.

3. METHODOLOGY

The fact that the main question in this study is to answer what is use of Facebook by Latino Muslims, this is an empirical question. Thus one needs to find a suitable method in answering this question and analyzing the issue in depth.

3.1. Research Method and Design

Social science, the discussion whether qualitative or quantitative methods are more valid does not seem to be coming to an end. Therefore, at this point the characteristics of both methodologies will be discussed briefly first before proceeding to explain the methodology that will be used in this study.

Quantitative research methods are mostly standardized procedures, trying to measure social phenomena by numbers and testing hypotheses through fixed variables. Due to their standardized measures they are applicable for rather large samples and facilitate the finding of generalizable data (Patton 2002). Moreover, some phenomena or social processes are simply not measurable by numbers, through statistics or with random samples. In such cases using quantitative methods might rather limit the chances of discovering certain aspects of these phenomena (Silverman 2006).

Qualitative research methods can be defined as "any kind of research that produces findings not arrived by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (Strauss and Corbin 1990:17). Thus, the focus lies on in-depth understanding of words, opinions and experiences rather than on numbers. Moreover, qualitative methods are concentrating more on the individual than on the general (Mayring 2000). Qualitative research is mostly inductive. Although backed up with a theoretical framework, the data should be guiding the study, not a theory (Taylor and Bogdan 1998). The qualitative research might be perceived as rather subjective, due to the personal involvement of the researcher in a rather open study. Moreover, the generalization of qualitative research might be limited as it is mostly looking at

individual cases, and samples are rarely picked randomly. However, generalization is not the main goal of qualitative research; rather it aims at understanding and exploring a certain case and context (Bryman 2008).

The methodology for research depends specially on the type of the research question. For rather explorative studies, like this one, qualitative methods seem a suitable choice. Instead of measuring the phenomenon of integration by numbers, this study uses open questions to explore the Latino Muslims´ situation, besides the qualitative method is not use to generalize, and it can contribute for future researches. The main focus of this research is inductive, trying to develop an understanding of what the use of Facebook as a space for communication and community online means for Latino Muslims.

3.2. Research and Sampling

In order to present original results for this work the research method aims to have a reliable and efficient structure to address the purpose and answer the stated research questions with rationality and objectivity. To achieve this, the data collection and its analysis require specific information about the topic or the field as well theory, methods or models in order to measure and interpret the findings obtained during the investigation.

This study will analyze e-space groups from Latin America, which fit into the requirements settled to evaluate them and analyze how online communication may or may not help to develop a sense of community. Considering the vast geographical area and disperse situation of Muslim minorities in the continent make this selection difficult. However, through a sampling design, this thesis made this selection based on activeness of these groups and geographical coverage in the continent.

Sampling design is the process whereby a researcher chooses the investigation object. The sample of a study can have a profound impact on the outcome of a study. This thesis focuses on Muslim converts in Latin America. As mentioned above,

geographical distance, low intensity of Muslim population in the continent makes the direct communication between them very difficult. Therefore, using the advantages of technology, these Muslim converts resort to e-spaces as a way of communication, share information, get to know about other Muslims in the continent and most importantly to develop a sense of community. Latin America is far away from the Muslim world and this put them in an environment where their challenges to live as Muslims are very different and in a way unique, considering Latino culture and false perception about Muslim among Latinos. These elements also feed to use more e-spaces.

One can find many e-spaces on Facebook about Latino Muslims and there is no official list of Latino Muslims online communities, besides the ones used in the events organized with this minorities by international religious organizations. This study sought to find a representative list of Muslims communities in the continent however, there is no official information about the communities. As mentioned in the first part of this study, there is a growing number of Latinos who converted in Islam especially in the last several years. Although the main arena of this study will not covers all of them, due to limitations, one has to do purposive sampling. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, a sampling will be done based on the participation of Latino representatives or leaders on the "The First Latin American Muslim Leaders Religious Summit" on 2014 in Istanbul (Turkey) which contact information had been given by the Presidency of Religious Affairs (DIYANET) and the information gathered during the "First Congress of Latino Muslim Women" on 2016 in Mexico City (Mexico) which groups will be analyzed too. It is important to make clear that although the congress in Mexico was only for woman the spaces provided by them are the official Facebook use by the community that they were representing, these spaces are not gender segregate or online female communities, they in fact represent the Latino Muslim community of the place they come from.

Based on the list provided by the Presidency of Religious Affairs (DIYANET) that included, person in charge, e-mail, telephone and email or website, and

information gathered personally at the "First Congress of Latino Muslim Women in Latin America" in Mexico City, this study have invited all the communities of the lists that fit into the scoop by email or in person to participate in this research. However, if the organization do not answer, do not accept the invitation or do not own a space in Facebook, it will not be analyze about it. In the case that the space is not active within two months it would be categorized as "Inactive", it will been eliminated because it is unlikely to contribute to this research.

The following organizations from Spanish speaker countries list that participated in the "First Latin American Muslim Leaders Religious Summit" in Istanbul was reached using the information provided by Veysi Kaya Director of Educational and Cultural Services from the Presidency of Religious Affairs (DIYANET), in total 29 organizations:

Table 3: *Organizations Contacted with the Information Provided by Presidency of Religious Affairs (DIYANET)*

Organizations contacted with the information provided by Presidency of Religious Affairs (DIYANET)	
Country	**Organization**
Argentina	- Organización Islámica de America Latina - Centro Islamico - Centro Islamico de Mendoza - Centro Islámico de Córdoba
Bolivia	- Centro Islamico - Asociacion Islamica de Bolivia
Chile	- Centro Islamico de Chile - Centro Cultural Islamico
Colombia	- Asociacion Islamica de Colombia

	- Centro Cultural Islamico de Barranquilla - Centro Islamico de Maicao
Cuba	- Asociacion Islamica de Cuba
Costa Rica	- Centro Islámico de Costa Rica
Ecuador	- Centro Islamico de Ecuador
Guatemala	- Asociación Guatemalteca de Musulmanes
Honduras	- Asociacion Islamica de Honduras
Nicaragua	- Centro Islámico de Nicaragua
Mexico	- Centro Cultural Islamico - Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Arabe
Paraguay	- Centro Islamico de Paraguay - Centro Islamico de Asuncion
Peru	- Comunidad Islamica de San Borja - Comunidad Islamica de Peru
Uruguay	- Centro Islamico de Uruguay
Panama	- Comunidad Musulmana de Panamá - Asociación Panameña de Musulmanes
Venezuela	- Centro Islámico de Laguaira - Sociedad Islámica de Venezuela - Centro Islámico Sur

The following organizations were contacted during the "First Congress of Latino Muslim Women" in Mexico City held on February 2016, three of them were contacted before too through the information provided by the Presidency of Religious Affairs (DIYANET) and three of them were out of that list, so they were included in the study:

Table 4: *Organizations Contacted During the "First Congress of Latino Muslim Woman"*

Organizations contacted during the "First Congress of Latino Muslim Women" in Mexico	
Country	**Organization**
Argentina	Islam Para Niños
Colombia	Asociación Centro Cultural Islámico de Medellín
Ecuador	Centro Islamico de Guayaquil
Uruguay	Centro Islamico de Uruguay*
Honduras	Asociacion Islamica de Honduras*
Mexico	Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Arabe*

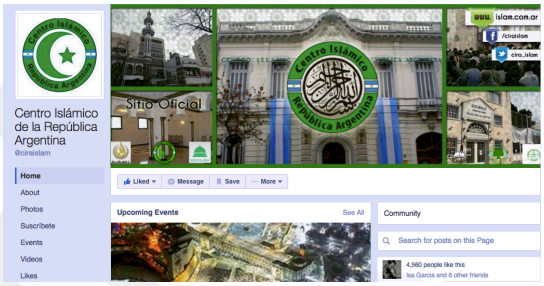
*Already contacted with the information provided by the Presidency of Religious Affairs (DIYANET)

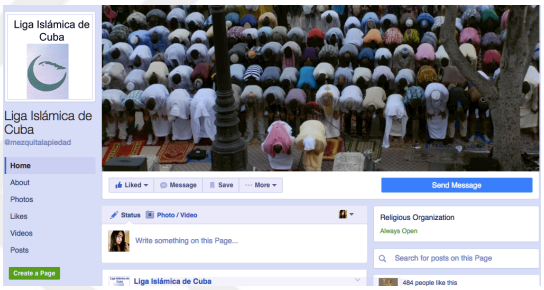
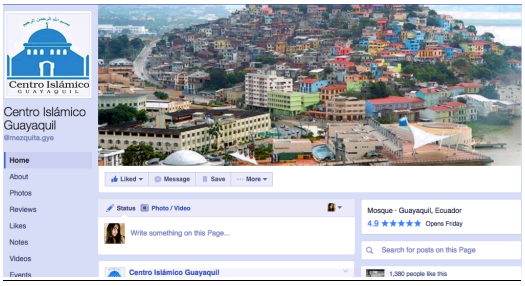
The organization "Sociedad Islamica de Peru" answer to the invitation done by e-mail but do not possessed a space in Facebook, so they were not analyzed, however a copy from this work will be provided for them in case that they decide in future establish a Facebook space:

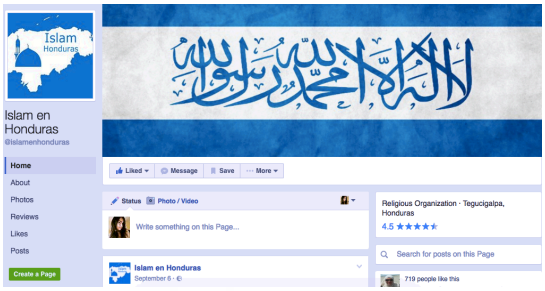
The following organizations provided groups and official pages on Facebook links, they are presented by country, community and the link, only Argentina and Ecuador owned two communities, all the spaces were accessed during August and September 2016:

Table 5: *Countries, Organizations and Facebook Links*

Countries, organizations and links of the spaces in Facebook		
Country	**Organization**	**Link**
Argentina	Islam Para Niños Centro Islamico	- https://www.facebook.com/Islam-para-Ni%C3%B1os-274701259346286/?fref=ts

		 - https://www.facebook.com/ciraislam/ 
Bolivia	Centro Islamico	https://www.facebook.com/centroislamicoboliviano/?fref=ts 
Chile	Centro Cultural Islamico	https://www.facebook.com/rabbani.chile/?fref=ts 
Colombia	Asociación Centro Cultural Islámico de	https://www.facebook.com/groups/411354535613203/

	Medellín	
Cuba	Asociacion Islamica de Cuba	https://www.facebook.com/mezquitalapiedad 
Ecuador	Centro Islamico de Ecuador Centro Islamico de Guayaquil	https://www.facebook.com/CentroIslamicoDelEcuadorMezquitaAssalam/?fref=ts  https://www.facebook.com/mezquita.gye/?fref=ts 

Honduras	Asociacion Islamica de Honduras	https://www.facebook.com/islamenhondurias/?fref=ts 
Mexico	Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Arabe	https://www.facebook.com/AlHikmahorgmx/?surface=rese 

The e-spaces reached represent ten communities from eight countries; these Muslim populations in these countries represent some of the most known communities of Muslims in Latin America. Given the limitation of this thesis and purpose, these sampling hopes to give a picture of these virtual communities through this research.

However, in any sampling approach, the researcher tries to find cases rich in information (Patton 2002) providing certain attributes demanded by the character of the study (Silverman 2000). For this study, those attributes are related to the background of the Latino Muslims community such as how many years has, population and whether they have support or connections with Muslim world and their active participation on the Latino Islamic environment. Although information was tried to reach about these communities, it could not be achieved due that there is not information about it.

Measuring the content of e-spaces is not an easy task. However, based on the reach questions this study investigates the Latino Muslims communities' online presence in Facebook Fanpage and groups. (i) It will be analyzed if these spaces can meet the characteristics of sense of virtual community, or if the remain as settlements around of a specific need. (ii). Qualifying the engagement, participation, response and reaction of group members are key elements to see and analyze their sense of community. (iii) In all e-spaces analyzed for this thesis, we looked at the practices of communication, whether there is consistency in the topics that are posted as well as the type of content used. If there is a connection between them, it is likely that the spaces have a discussion structure. (iv) Related to overall discussion strategy, who sets agenda, commands the knowledge and debates is very important. This thesis has also analyzed this dimension in these groups. (v) The authority presented and well as any type of hierarchy is crucial to acknowledge who and how the groups are lead. Lastly (vi), Latin America has one of the least Muslim visibilities. Therefore, connection of Latino Muslims with overall Muslim world is critical not only in terms of learning Islam better but also being part of the *Ummah*. In these e-spaces, this study looks at this dimension as well.

Analysis will be carried out through observant involvement; of course the immersion of the researcher may imply subjectivism.

3.3. Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection for this thesis is content analysis. The organizations were contacted in person or by e-mail, in order to obtain the official or institutional link of the space in Facebook. The content of the space for a definitive time period has been screened and analyzed in details. This analysis is done through the lens of above-mentioned points to substantiate the arguments in the thesis. In order to gather data answering the research question, a suitable research method needs to be found. In the

following, the choice for participant observation and how these will be conducted is explained.

Qualitative content analysis will be taking place in the Islamic virtual environments of Facebook such as groups and Fanpage. Special attention will be given to the context in which interactions are given, exploring actions, individual experiences or opinions regarding the researched phenomenon.

After observing the content of the selected e-spaces, the information will be categorized in order to process them for analysis according to above-mentioned. A suitable method for this study is the qualitative content analysis as explained by Mayring. This method and how it was applied will be described in the following.

Qualitative content analysis by Mayring is an approach aiming at analyzing communication material in a systematic way (Mayring 2000). It seems to be a useful method because it tries to build on the strengths of the quantitative analysis such as its guidance by rules and following of the concepts of verification reliability and validity. The method then changes these strengths in a meaningful way for the analysis of qualitative data (Mayring 2000). In order to conduct qualitative content analysis, the source material needs to be defined as a first step. This includes declaring which spaces were observed, how the sample was chosen, what the basic conditions of the sampling were and how the spaces to be analyzed was obtained as it was done in the earlier section.

The research questions we done based on a literature research aiming to describe theirs characteristic, this make easier for the research to set the purpose and the way data would be analyzed. The research questions and the literature based on, are presented and explained through the chapter two.

According to Mayring (2000) there exist three basic forms of interpretation in qualitative content analysis, namely “summary”, meaning the reduction of the data “explication”, by finding further material and “structuring”, meaning filtering

important aspects from the data. For the present qualitative content analysis, "structuring" and filtering the relevant content out of the material as a whole and analyze them regarding in advance specified categories seems to be the most appropriate way. Defining the categories serves as a means to filter the data fitting into. As the topics that the spaces focus on could not all be foreseen, most categories that are in mind now are tentative and may be revised during the process of analysis. This is important in order not to influence the analysis through assumptions or perceptions of the researcher.

It is very important to acknowledge that although data will be gather in Spanish it will be translate later into English, however, "fluency in both 'languages' is not the equivalent of cultural fluency" (Kim and Kuljis, 2010), in this part the roll of the researcher is key to clarify any possible cultural misunderstanding.

Despite that some categories were set from the beginning as far as the research was in course, new categories where added, such as Photos, Documents, Facebook events, Facebook links and gratitude, due that they were constantly present and seems to be an important part for the communities to have in account. Facebook memories were accounted as the information of the post this means, if the memory was an image with text, this will be accounted as such. The material that was in Arabic was translated by the researcher and verify for a bilingual member in order to make a right qualification of the data.

3.4. Operational Definitions

Aiming to have clear definitions of what is going to be analyzed in this thesis, terms regarding to Facebook and sense of virtual community, as well as population will be defined here. It is important to point that this study will take as a base the previous research done by Blanchard and Markus in 2002, and the one done by Norman in 2012 about online communities, where an qualitative analysis was

performed in communities observing the interactions and conversation between the members of the space, highlighting the relevant information for the research.

- **Research time:** The research will be carried on atemporal, seeing and gathering information from 1st May 2016 to 31st July 2016.

- **Settlements:** Are groups of people that share something in common, this might be a geographical space or interest.

- **Communities of practice:** These are groups where feelings, like identity, relations, support, influence and other characteristics are shared but the participation and connections are done aiming mainly by the actions or practices, for instance a prayer community where all issues around the praying meetings, or an activist group which mainly do demonstrations.

- Communities of solidarity: These are groups where feelings, like identity, relations, support, influence and other characteristics are shared but their participation is carried aiming to fulfill the need of the members and support each-other

- Sense of community (SOC): Are the characteristic needed by a group to feel as a community, listed shorty below (see chapter 4):

- Sense of membership: Members feels part of the group, identifying themselves as Muslims in this case, setting symbols, barriers and their own way to express (in this cases by the language)

- Sense of influence: Members can feel influence in their believe or behaviors by others, or, influence other members by their participation on Facebook.

- Fulfillments: Members meet their material or spiritual needs through the information or activities done through the space.

- **Emotional connection:** These are the relations, sympathetic and support given by and to the members in the space.

- **Reactions:** These are the "Like", "Love", "Ha ha", "Wow", "Sad" or "Angry" options offered by Facebook given by the participants to posts in the spaces. "Like", "Love", "Ha ha" and "Wow" will be calcified as positive, meanwhile "Sad" or "Angry" will be seen as negative reactions. In this part the quantity and type will be measured.

- **Comments:** Messages by participants left on the post of the spaces. Comments will be accounted manually but also the content (or conversation) will be categorized in the topics concerning to the SOVC aiming to see if the spaces fill the main components of SOCV and if they are communities or settlements.

- Sense of virtual community (SOVC): Similar to SOC is the way members feel part of a community, in the SOVC influence cannot be perceived so the model was adapted by Blanchard and Markus in 2002, and the characteristics are below, which are gong to be analyzed to see of the spaces meet all or most of them:

- **Recognition**: Members are recognized and recognize others. Special attention will be given to the comments that indicate recognition of members, being done by name, experiences, or others.

- **Identification:** In SOC sense of membership. Members can identify themselves as part or the group sharing, values and principles. Comments that seem to point identification with the group, members or religion will be distinguished, as well for those that may indicate the opposite, like disassociation of the community. Images, symbols, special language or delimitation of borders, will be also point in order to indicate identification.

- **Support:** In SOC fulfillment. Emotional support or information in the virtual space is given by and to the members. Comments that indicate help encourage or support in other ways, being emotional or informational, will be underlined.
- **Relationship:** Emotional connection in SOC, the connection made among the members. Despite that is hard to prove if there are relations on the web, comments which indicate emotional feelings, friendship, closeness or other type of relation between members will be marked.
- **Emotional attachment:** This is the relation between the member and the space despite the members. Only comments that indicates emotional attachment to the space will be accounted, this will help to see if there is attachment and how is expressed by the members to the space.
- **Obligation:** The need to participate or engage with the community. It will be observed by the comments that indicate the need to participate or engage with the community, in other words the commitment by the members to keep active the e-space.

- **Shares:** The multiplication of the post by the option of Facebook "Share" done by the participants. It will be observed to see if content is replicate by the members.

- **Management involvement:** This means when the management of the group comment or like to post or comments done. It will be observed if the management post, how often, what type of content and the topics, also will be reviewed the participation in the post and conversations, such are incentivizing dialog, creating questions, answering to inquiries and giving support in a emotional and informational way.

- **Links with broader Muslim (e-) communities:** To analyze this aspect special attention will be given in the post from other webs or Facebook pages share by the different communities. As well as the events propagated.

- **Authority or hierarchy:** Comments that suggest authority by the management or any kind of hierarchy among the members will be pointed.

- **Topics:** these are the topics settled, if new appears they will be underlined at the end of the research:

    - **Quran:** Quranic verses or recitations.

    - **Hadith:** Actions or sayings done by the Islamic prophet Muhammad.

    - **Dua:** Islamic supplications.

    - **Islam:** Information about religion in general, such as prayers, stories, celebrations, beliefs, rituals, etc.

    - **Event:** These are events propagate on the space where the members are invited to attend.

- **Community (com):** This are post related to the community, being events, anecdotes, members of the community, issues which are related to the members or may be concerned to them in social terms, etc.

- **Content type:** Here will be classified by the type format of the information that is released on the space.

    - **Text (txt):** Only text or emoticons.

    - **Image (image):** images, graphics, or pictures that do not belong to the community.

    - **Photo (pht):** photographics of the community.

    - **Video (vid):** videos from the community or other sources like YouTube, Vimeo, etc.

- Link: external links.

- F.Event: these are events done using the tool of "Create an event" of Facebook.

- Doc: Documents like PDF, Word, Excel, etc.

- FCBK: links from others Facebook's profiles, pages or groups.

Every post published on the spaces will be analyzed and fit into these different categories. Through the gathering information, these categories may have sub-categories for instance, type of post (image, photo, etc.), SOCV (identification, support, etc.), topic (Islam in general, Quran, community, etc.), etc. If more categories are identified these will be noted as well as any relevant point for the investigation. Through posting and participation by comments will be tried to determined if there is a hierarchy and authority, as well an agenda.

4. ANALYSIS OF LATINO MUSLIMS PRESENCE IN FACEBOOK

The following organizations answered to the invitation done to participate in the analysis, accepted to participate, owning an space in Facebook that was active during May, June and July, and finally provided the link of the space thus were analyzed:

Table 6: *Organizations Analyzed*

Organizations Analyzed	
Country	**Organization**
Argentina	- Islam Para Niños - Centro Islamico
Bolivia	- Centro Islamico
Chile	- Centro Cultural Islamico
Colombia	- Asociación Centro Cultural Islámico de Medellín
Cuba	- Asociacion Islamica de Cuba
Ecuador	- Centro Islamico de Ecuador - Centro Islamico de Guayaquil
Honduras	- Asociacion Islamica de Honduras
Mexico	- Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Arabe

Some general observations done about the analysis are presented in order to have a global view of the communities. Only one community state which is its mission in the "About" section, this is very important to publics in order to know what type of organization is and who is behind.

When analyzing the spaces there were some similarities that were found in most of them, for instance it can be seen that there is an engagement in the spaces some in a higher way than others but yet it exists, however, in most of the cases this

represents much less than a quarter of the total members. Most of the spaces uses the format of Fanpage which set much more control in the posting and moderation of content, as well this give options which may help to improve the development of the space if they are use, like the insights for example. It is important to underline the fact the most of the communities do not incentive dialog, in fact they barely participate after making a post, few of them get involved giving like to the comments or responding to inquires, which can be one of the reasons why the engagement is low.

For the reactions, most of them were always positive, however there was a presence of negatives ones too. Most of the comments do not lead to conversations, they were supporting words and tags, an interesting finding was that many member expressed gratitude.

Respecting to the content, can be see that mostly are images with text followed by Facebook links, few communities were producing their own material and using their logo on the graphics. Regarding to the topics most were related to the community and could be noted that members have more reactions and involvement to events or pictures of the community than external material, the spaces use many Islamic information which seemed to be also relevant for the public. It was notorious, that management has not any agenda, just in the case of the Sufi community they have some repetitive activities during one month, but besides that, there is not organization about the topics and the time of release.

Members seems to not be all locals, in fact they were many people who seems to live away from these community but yet they participate, in the other hand it could be seen that some members participate in different communities at the time, being very active, although due to the information was not possible to determined if they were leaders. Most of the members seems to be inactive or lurkers.

It seems that most of the spaces are strongly based on the offline communities and their events, members seems to be more interested to the offline sphere. The connection or relation with other organizations is low but there is presence however, it cannot be established how strong are these ties. It seems that the communities from, Medellin, Guayaquil, and Mexico have relations or at least

share other organizations' material. It is important to point the support from international organism such as Saudi Arabian Government and Presidency of Religious Affairs (DIYANET).

Although most the spaces were Fanpage with a management they do not exert an strong authority over the community, the managers in many spaces barely were aware of the interactions though, some seems to be responsive to support and recognizing members. It could not be identify any hierarchy, the fact that analysis was done atemporal it cannot be seen if there is any type of censorship or banning for content and members.

The sense of community was not fully perceive in any space, although some of them had characteristic of it such as, recognition, support and relationship, in the contrary, emotional attachment, obligation and identification was barely found, meanwhile a high expression of gratitude was found in most of the communities.

According to the categorization made for this research and the model settled to follow. The information found will be presented. First, the basic but relevant information (members number, type and number of posts). Then the aspects regarding to engagement (reactions, shares and comments):

The below table shows the number of member in the spaces in order to know their size, this will be important for the analyze to proportionate engagement and indications of SOVC as it can be seen the smallest space have 129 and the biggest 4,545 members:

Table 7: *Members Per Space in Facebook*

Number of members per space in Facebook	
Organization	**Number of members**
Islam Para Niños (ARG)	1,361
Centro Islamico Republica de Argentina (ARG)	4,485

Centro Islamico Boliviano (BOL)	559
Centro Cultural Islamico (Sufi) (CHI)	2,649
Asociación Centro Cultural Islámico de Medellín (COL)	696
Asociacion Islamica de Cuba (CUB)	129
Centro Islamico de Ecuador (ECU)	1.796
Centro Islamico de Guayaquil (ECU)	1,286
Asociacion Islamica de Honduras (HON)	694
Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Arabe (MEX)	4,545

The biggest communities are Centro Islamico Republica de Argentina and Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Arabe, contrary the smallest are Centro Islamico Boliviano and Asociacion Islamica de Cuba.

The type of the space help to determine which options or tools have the different communities to develop the communication and SOVC in Facebook, all the spaces manage Fanpages, to join them the user only have to give "Like" to the Fanpage and will be part of it. Only the "Asociación Centro Cultural Islámico de Medellín" uses the option closed-group making the information and interactions private.

The number of posts made during the research by May, June and July are presented below, the community with less posts is Asociacion Islamica de Cuba, meanwhile the one with most posts is Centro Islamico de Ecuador, despite that Ramadan occurred most of the month of June, the highest posting occurred on May in half of the communities, followed by June with three and July with 2 spaces:

Table 8: *Post Done During May, June and May, and Total Post in the Studied Spaces*

Organization	**May**	**June**	**July**	**TOTAL**
Islam Para Niños (ARG)	17	2	16	35
Centro Islamico Republica de Argentina (ARG)	24	46	50	120
Centro Islamico Boliviano (BOL)	6	16	20	42
Centro Cultural Islamico (Sufi) (CHI)	7	10	7	24
Asociación Centro Cultural Islámico de Medellín (COL)	44	41	42	127
Asociacion Islamica de Cuba (CUB)	6	2	0	8
Centro Islamico de Ecuador (ECU)	107	149	44	300
Centro Islamico de Guayaquil (ECU)	24	67	46	137
Asociacion Islamica de Honduras (HON)	6	3	2	11
Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Arabe (MEX)	49	32	25	106

Despite that was expected to find higher activity during the month of Ramadan (June) the only two community that had a increase in the number of post were Centro Islamico de Ecuador and Centro Islamico de Guayaquil which also own the higher number of total posts. The communities with less number of post during the three months were Asociacion Islamica de Cuba and Asociacion Islamica de Honduras. Only two communities show to keep balanced number of post during the three months they were Centro Cultural Islamico and Asociación Centro Cultural Islámico de Medellín.

To analyze the engagement by the members to the space, three elements were observed; reactions, shares and comments. This help to understand if how members react to the post, if they spread them and through the comments if

conversations or discussion are give in the space. The findings are presented below:

Table 9: *Number of Posts that presented Reactions, Shares and Comments in the Latino Muslim Spaces*

Organization	**T.P**	**Reactions**	**Shares**	**Comments**
Islam Para Niños (ARG)	35	34	8	2
Centro Islamico Republica de Argentina (ARG)	120	115	87	75
Centro Islamico Boliviano (BOL)	42	41	31	28
Centro Cultural Islamico (Sufi) (CHI)	24	22	14	9
Asociación Centro Cultural Islámico de Medellín (COL)	127	112	-	48
Asociacion Islamica de Cuba (CUB)	8	3	1	-
Centro Islamico de Ecuador (ECU)	300	279	25	63
Centro Islamico de Guayaquil (ECU)	137	135	108	48
Asociacion Islamica de Honduras (HON)	11	11	10	6
Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Arabe (MEX)	106	107	65	40

Most of the post owned reactions, however the shares and comments are lower and less persistent.

Reactions constitute a great source of information regarding to engagement, Facebook give six options: “Like”, “Love”, “Ha ha”, “Wow”, “Sad” or “Angry; allowing to users to express their feelings about a post. The outcomes are shown below:

Table 10: *Observation and Commentaries About the Reactions Found in the Latino Muslims Spaces*

Organization	**Reactions**
Islam Para Niños (ARG)	All posts except one have reactions ranging from 1 to 18 all positive mainly "Like" and "Love", most of the posts posses between 2-6 positive reactions.
Centro Islamico Republica de Argentina (ARG)	Most of the reactions were positive "Like" and "Love", few were sad (24th May, 13th June, 15th July and 31st July), the minimum reaction found in a post were 1 and the maximum was 190
Centro Islamico Boliviano (BOL)	Range from 0 to 79, all of them being positive. The higher numbers of reactions were on the albums where pictures of activities done by the community are shared.
Centro Cultural Islamico (Sufi) (CHI)	All of the posts were positive, around 10-20 but ranging for 0 to 90.
Asociación Centro Cultural Islámico de Medellín (COL)	Some post do not have any reaction at all. The reactions are mostly positive except from the post on 4th July where an "angry" was found.
Asociacion Islamica de Cuba (CUB)	Only 3 posts had reaction, all were positive.
Centro Islamico de Ecuador (ECU)	Most of the reactions (279 post) were positive "Like" and "Love". The reactions "sad" were found in: in the post regarding to the death of Muhammad Ali, in the post of 15th July regarding to families in Gaza during Ramadan, 16th July a post about the lack of water during Ramadan in Gaza (beside an "angry" reaction), 2 sad reactions about the post of 24ht July about Burma.
Centro Islamico de Guayaquil (ECU)	Most of the reactions on the Fanpage were like or love. 235 post presented reactions.
Asociacion Islamica de Honduras (HON)	All of the reactions were "Like" and "Love" except for "angry" in the post of 25th July.
Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Arabe (MEX)	All reactions were positive, from 1 up to 90, but in general stable numbers between 20-40.

The "share" in a Facebook site represent how many times the post has been replicate publically, this a good indication of engagement and spread of information too, the results of the analyze are the next:

Table 11: *Observations and Commentaries of the "Share" Found in the Latino Muslim Spaces*

Organization	**Shares**
Islam Para Niños (ARG)	8 posts have been shared between once and twice.
Centro Islamico Republica de Argentina (ARG)	Members do not share all posts, but the shares ranges from 0 to 204. In a overall being reproduce between 10-30 times.
Centro Islamico Boliviano (BOL)	Most of the posts are shared more than once, ranging from 0 (very few) to 20 shares. Most are share 4 times.
Centro Cultural Islamico (Sufi) (CHI)	Around half of the posts were shared, but some were shared very low (twice) others in very high numbers (50-90 times)
Asociación Centro Cultural Islámico de Medellín (COL)	There are not shares at all. Although all the material is shared from other sites.
Asociacion Islamica de Cuba (CUB)	There were only 2 shares.
Centro Islamico de Ecuador (ECU)	Most of the posts are not share; it can vary from 1 up to 22.
Centro Islamico de Guayaquil (ECU)	Posts were shared from 1 to 24 times, but most of them from 1 to 5.
Asociacion Islamica de Honduras (HON)	All posts except one was shared ranging from 2-29 times, being more repetitive around 5 times.
Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Arabe (MEX)	The posts are often shared, not always, from 0-194, in overall between 10-20 shares can be observed.

Dialogs and discussions given on the virtual spaces imply interactions among members as well can hint characteristics of SOVC like relationship and recognition.

Table 12: *Observations and Commentaries About the Comments Found in the Latino Muslim Spaces*

Organization	**Comments**
Islam Para Niños (ARG)	There were few (4 in total) comments and they were tags to others members.
Centro Islamico Republica de Argentina (ARG)	Some of the comments were Islamic information like the 99 names of god and history about Islam in Spain. There is a discussion or conversation given about the Diego Maradona where some members expressed different opinion about the soccer player on 9th June. In the post of 24th May can bee seen that members discuss the position of the organization regarding to the terrorists attacks in other Islamic countries. Finally words of support like "congratulations", "Allahu Akbar", "MashaaAllah" and replies to supplication like "Amin" or "Insha'Allah" can be found in the comments of some posts.
Centro Islamico Boliviano (BOL)	Most of the post has comments but they are not conversations, one can find messages of joy or gratitude, finding Arabic expression like "MashaaAllah" (used to express joy and thankfulness) or "Mabrouk" (used to express blessings or congratulations).
Centro Cultural Islamico (Sufi) (CHI)	There were very low numbers of comments mainly supporting with words like "MashaaAllah" or thanking. There were not conversations.
Asociación Centro Cultural Islámico de Medellín (COL)	The numbers of comments are low 1 to 20, around 4 average and not in all posts, just in few post conversations can be seen (23rd May, 29th May, 30th May, 20th June) and users in the comments tag other members.
Asociacion Islamica de Cuba (CUB)	There are not comments on the posts.
Centro Islamico de Ecuador (ECU)	It can be seen that most of the comments are replies, to supplications or events, there is just one kind of conversation or debate between a member and the management regarding to the way to make the Adhan. Most of the comments are: Amin, MashaaAllah, Allah Akbar and Alhamdulillah.
Centro Islamico de Guayaquil (ECU)	Few posts had comments on them, ranging from 0 to 25 per post, being 0-2 an average. Most of the comments are words of support or tags. There are very few conversations.
Asociacion Islamica de Honduras (HON)	The comments were not real conversation or exchange of information, although some members where having questions and requesting help answers are rarely found.

Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Arabe (MEX)	Some people made tags on the comments. A short conversation is given on the post of 12th may where members talk about. In most of the comments where people asked support or had question management answered. However, does not motivate dialog. Words like Allah Akbar, Alhamdulillah, Amin, can be found in the comments (14th may).

There is a very low presence of dialog and discussion over the posts. Mainly comments are supporting (Arabic) words and tags.

Summarizing the previous features of engagement a global view of the topic is given:

Table 13: *Overview of the Engagement Found in the Latino Muslim Spaces*

Organization	**Engagement**
Islam Para Niños (ARG)	For a community with more than 1.300 members a maximum of 18 reactions and a total of 4 comments during 3 months is a very low or non-existing engagement by the members. It is also important to point also that administration lacks commitment with the community space, there is not a real tracing of the post or involvement to engage members.
Centro Islamico Republica de Argentina (ARG)	Observing the responses from members to the post it can be seen that there is an engagement, however, the number of members is so much higher than the numbers reflected in the results.
Centro Islamico Boliviano (BOL)	There are indications of engagement reactions, shares and comments are fairly good for the size of the community. However, this can improved.
Centro Cultural Islamico (Sufi) (CHI)	Engagement is present if reactions and shared are accounted, although the space have more than 2,600 members, it might be higher however, they completely lack of dialog and interaction among members.
Asociación Centro Cultural Islámico de Medellín (COL)	There is very low engagement by the community but can be improved.
Asociacion Islamica de Cuba (CUB)	The engagement in overall is very low. Although the members constitute a community of 129 people.
Centro Islamico de Ecuador (ECU)	In an overview the engagement is low, there are many post and some do not had any reaction at all. It seems that the main problem for it is that management make many post in a single day while other days do not make any post at all. An agenda and engagement by the management is

	needed.
Centro Islamico de Guayaquil (ECU)	The engagement is low; the community reacts but do not establish or engage conversations. The data indicates that people are there but the participation is low despite that administration is tracing posts.
Asociacion Islamica de Honduras (HON)	Observing the reactions, comments and shares it can be that the community has an engagement although is very low if members' numbers are accounted. However engagement from the management is low which could affect the overall engagement, which could be boosted.
Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Arabe (MEX)	It can be said that in general the engagement is good, people is active and aware of the post, but conversation and messages must be improved.

The main two topics dealt in the Latino Muslim e-spaces are related to community and Islam.

The engagement is related to the performance of the management, this does not mean only in the way they post, but also in how aware is the management of the reactions, shares and comments, they can provoke conversations and avoid crisis, the results of the analysis of the involvement is show below:

Table 14: *Management Involvement in the Latino Muslim Spaces*

Organization	**Involvement by the management to the space**
Islam Para Niños	There is not involvement by the management; there are not likes or comments done by managers in the post analyzed. The fact that some posts are accepted to publish latter indicates careless by the management.
Centro Islamico Republica de Argentina	It can be found in few posts that the management responds, they mainly add information to the post and reply to questions done by members.
Centro Islamico Boliviano	There is involvement in the community not only by the post done but also liking comments, there is only one comment done by the management in Arabic which means "Allah reward you with goodness", there is not motivation to make dialog from the administration.
Centro Cultural Islamico (Sufi)	Only one participation, besides the posts, it can be concluded that there is not involvement.
Asociación Centro Cultural Islámico de Medellín	It cannot be analyzed because there is not clarity about who is managing the space.
Asociacion Islamica de Cuba	Besides the posts there is not engagement.
Centro Islamico de Ecuador	There is little involvement in the post by the management.
Centro Islamico de Guayaquil	It can be seen that the management of the Fanpage is involved responding the inquiries and giving like to the members' comments in most of the posts. However, do not incentive the conversations.

Asociacion Islamica de Honduras	Only in one post the management involved giving information.
Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Arabe	There is a low involvement by the management but inquiries are answered most of the time. They also participate with short dialogs.

Management is poor or not involved in most of the spaces, except for the communities of Centro Islamico de Guayaquil and Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Arabe.

One of the objectives of this work was to study the linkages of the Latino Muslims communities with other communities online or not. Herewith the outcomes of each space are presented:

Table 15: *Links With Broader Muslim (e-) Communities*

Organization	**Links with broader Muslim (e-) communities:**
Islam Para Niños	There is a lot of material from www.islamencolombia.com shared on the space, in fact all external material comes from YouTube or the above mentioned website, however, is mainly Islamic material or news, there is not release of online classes or events, or any other content which would indicate alliance between the both spaces.
Centro Islamico Republica de Argentina	The community has support from the government of the Saudi Arabia Kingdom. They participate in interreligious and Islamic activities with other organizations. TV shows related to Islam are shared too.
Centro Islamico Boliviano	There is not indication that the space has alliances with other spaces or communities, all information is there own, even there are not shares from other sources.
Centro Cultural Islamico (Sufi)	Although they shared twice information from a Sufi sheikh (Mawlana Shaykh Mehmet Adil Ar Rabbani), links with other communities cannot be perceived.
Asociación Centro Cultural Islámico de Medellín	There is collaboration from other Islamic center "Al-qurtubi" (https://www.facebook.com/alqurtubi/?fref=ts), material and conferences online are shared and it seems that there is a connection between both communities.
Asociacion Islamica de Cuba	There is not evidence of linkages or collaboration from other Islamic communities.
Centro Islamico de Ecuador	In the space there is material from the Centro Islamico de Guayaquil (also analyzed here). Material from the Fanpage of Bilal Philips, Isa Garcia and Isa Rojas (prominent scholars in Latin America and U.S.A.) and organizations like Cordoba International TV are shared on the space. The

	center received help from the Turkish organization IHH.
Centro Islamico de Guayaquil	There is not indication of collaboration with other communities.
Asociacion Islamica de Honduras	There is not strong evidence of it, despite of a post shared from Cordoba TV, which does not mean they have alliances or real linkages.
Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Arabe	They share many material and events of (mujeres) Musulmanas Latinas A.C. the organization of the space receives support from the Turkish organization DIYANET.

Most of the organization share content from other spaces, however there is not official statement of alliances or collaboration despite to the Centro Islamico Republica de Argentina that receive help from Saudi Arabian Government and Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Arabe that receives support from Turkish DIYANET.

To define or categorize of the Latino Muslims spaces in Facebook are virtual communities or settlements, it is important to find out if the characteristics of SOVC (recognition, identification, support, relationship, emotional attachment and obligation) are met, the outcomes are presented below.

Recognition is how members recognize other members in the community and how others members recognized them, not only are part of community but also as similar to them.

Table 16: *Observations of the Recognition in the Latino Muslim Spaces*

Organization	**Recognition**
Islam Para Niños	There where not post or comments which indicate recognition from-to members.
Centro Islamico Republica de Argentina	There is not evidence pointing recognition from or to the members.
Centro Islamico Boliviano	It can be seen that some members recognize others who perform offline activities and also recognize themselves as part of the group, there is a comment where the member says "I was missed on the photography, Lic AMER, greetings, the classes were very good, thanks" (dated on 13th July), as well as the participation of one member who is named in one post. However,

	these are minimal expressions of recognition.
Centro Cultural Islamico (Sufi)	A single demonstration of recognition was found, one of the members express in a comment pointing the name of other member and expressing joyful about her.
Asociación Centro Cultural Islámico de Medellín	There is very few evidence of recognition, in the posts of 7th May, 23rd May, and 20th June, by the use of informal and closeness language can be seen than members recognize Mr. Dasuki as a sheikh or leader. In the post made on 11th June members listed the name of their children while others expressed admiration about the age, indicating also that they have grown and they know the children in person. In other post like on 30th June can be seen that members do not only recognize others but also know personally.
Asociacion Islamica de Cuba	There is not evidence of recognition.
Centro Islamico de Ecuador	In the comments of the post of 11th may be able to be seen that members recognize Sheikh Isa Garcia and Mr. Nasser al Muqbel. Among member can be seen that some of them use names and informal close language to communicate to others. In the post shared on 26th July there is a comment that indicate that the woman knows the girl of the video and express her support to her too.
Centro Islamico de Guayaquil	There is few indication of recognition between members, although they recognize the sheikh.
Asociacion Islamica de Honduras	Recognition was only observed in one post, where members show to know the management ad other members as well.
Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Arabe	There were not expressions that indicate recognition of members despite the tags in some activities, and the tagging from the management. Nevertheless, some members do recognize the organization of DIYANET and explain to others what was about.

Some members recognize others, this can be perceived by the comments and the language used, however seems to be that they know personally offline.

Identification is the way members express their individuality and uniqueness in the group, both at the personal level, other members and as part of the community, in this case as Latino Muslim.

Table 17: *Identification Observations Found in the Latino Muslim Spaces*

Organization	**Identification**

Islam Para Niños	There was not found any indication of identity in the comments.
Centro Islamico Republica de Argentina	In some images about Ramadan identity hints can be found, such as the well-known Argentinian mate drink, as well the independence day of Argentina commemoration. Also was found that Arabic and Spanish are taught on the mosque to believers.
Centro Islamico Boliviano	In some texts of the post can be perceived sense of identity when administration express to the members as brothers, in the same way can be seen that members support actions and uses grammatical expression which indicate closeness.
Centro Cultural Islamico (Sufi)	In the post made on 14 June, is expressed "we as Sufi people…" and start a description of values and principles.
Asociación Centro Cultural Islámico de Medellín	Besides of the names in Arabic, and Islamic clothing on the pictures of the members there is not much proof or identification of the self or other members.
Asociacion Islamica de Cuba	There is not indication of identification.
Centro Islamico de Ecuador	There is not evidence of identification in the comments.
Centro Islamico de Guayaquil	On the post made on 3rd June, there is a clarification about what is the group and to where belongs, the Centro Islamico says in one of the comments "brother, this page belongs to an Islamic center in a south American country: Ecuador". In the post found on 26 July can be seen that a member point to aspects and symbols like hijab, which identify a Muslim.
Asociacion Islamica de Honduras	Enough information could not be found.
Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Arabe	In the post made on 10th July can be seen how a woman ask to not mix the languages (Spanish and English) and a short debate is opened.

There are not statement of self or group identification, only one comment make emphasis on it and it is found in the Centro Cultural Islamico (Sufi).

The exchange of support is key to maintain the interactions and the sense of community, support is given emotionally but also through the delivery of valuable information relevant to the group. It is seem also as part of the benefits of belonging to the community.

Table 18: *Support Observations About the Latino Muslim Spaces*

Organization	**Support**
Islam Para Niños	There are not indicators of support, nor from administration side neither from members at all.
Centro Islamico Republica de Argentina	Members support the organization through messages using Arab words like, Allahu Akbar, MashaaAllah**,**
Centro Islamico Boliviano	Messages wishing success and congratulations were found in some comments, which says phrases like, congratulations, MashaaAllah, may Allah reward you, etc. (for further details check the comments on the annexes Bolivia CIB post dating: 24 may, 25 may, 26 may, 13 Jun, 17 Jun, 20 Jun, 21 Jun, 22 Jun, 26 Jun, 2 Jul., 4 Jul. and 24 Jul.)
Centro Cultural Islamico (Sufi)	Is expressed in words in 2 post only. But in some post where a video was published about a community charity event and the management asked to share, people supported sharing.
Asociación Centro Cultural Islámico de Medellín	Support can be seen in some posts especially for those that involve an event, also in the post of 9th June in two ways, one is from an Islamic community from panama that sent clothes and other female stuff, and from the members who needed information about other Muslims in Panama. Through other post especially those that includes offline activities support to attend (23rd May and 6th July), is shown.
Asociacion Islamica de Cuba	There is not any kind of expressed or requested support.
Centro Islamico de Ecuador	Support can be seen in the post that involved activities offline (4th may, 6th may, 7th may, 11TH May). In a post made on 5th May and other on 29th May two members asked support the administration answered once in the case of 5th may, but ignored the other messages despite that the member was asking support from the center, as well as for the one on 29th.
Centro Islamico de Guayaquil	Support can be seen through different post were members make expressions like "MashaaAllah", "Allah Akbar" (10th May, 14th May, 27th May) and support offline events (5th June). There were two posts were administration asked support for the family of a member who died (29th may) although there was one reaction of "sad", there was a single comment asking, "What is the generosity with the neighbor". Support can be perceived in the comments made on events (talks, shahadat or other events) done offline. Management offers support to solve inquiries and offering virtual and physic material.
Asociacion Islamica de Honduras	There were not signs or expression of support rather than reactions.
Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Arabe	In post related to activities words of support can be seen like Allah Akbar, the same for some videos were Mexicans made Shahadah where support is shown.

	The management is active replying the inquiries and giving support.

Support was found but only in one way, there is not exchange, also is mainly by words in Arabic.

The relationships are indication of strong ties and feelings among the members. This can be perceived in the way the talk to each other.

Table 19: *Observations Done About the Relationship Found in the Latino Muslim Spaces*

Organization	**Relationship**
Islam Para Niños	There is not enough real comments or conversations to evaluate if there are relationships among the members.
Centro Islamico Republica de Argentina	There was not information that suggests relationships between members.
Centro Islamico Boliviano	There is not much evidence of relations but in a comment can be found "congratulations for the labor that you are doing" (dated on 13th July) the expression used in Spanish is very informal and familiar to express "that you are doing" which may indicate closeness between both members.
Centro Cultural Islamico (Sufi)	Could not be found.
Asociación Centro Cultural Islámico de Medellín	In the post of 7th may one member ask if he can join the meeting that will be held on the mosque to discuss the activities during Ramadan, there Mr. Dasuki answered her "you, more than anyone can attend. Everybody is welcome". On 11th June post can be seen that some female members know each other as well their children in person and express closeness. On the post of 20th June can be seen that member do recognize Mr. Tejada as well as other members like Mr. Dasuki who is called sheikh. On 30th June and 5th July post relationship can be observed among the members.
Asociacion Islamica de Cuba	There is not information to support that there are relationships.
Centro Islamico de Ecuador	There is not enough information to say that there are relationships.
Centro Islamico de Guayaquil	Relations can be perceived strongly on the two posts made on 11th July where members express feelings toward to the sheikh who will leave the community.

Asociacion Islamica de Honduras	There is not material to support that there are relations among members.
Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Arabe	Relationship cannot be perceived.

Relationship indications were found but was very low and only in two communities: Asociación Centro Cultural Islámico de Medellín and Centro Islamico de Guayaquil.

The emotional attachment is the indications of affection or connection to the community. It can be perceived by the reactions, but specially by comments.

Table 20: *Indications Observed About Emotional Attachment on the Latino Muslim Spaces*

Organization	**Emotional Attachment**
Islam Para Niños	The lack of comments makes no way to prove that emotional attachment is given on the space.
Centro Islamico Republica de Argentina	Can be perceive only in one comment were a member expressed his feelings toward the community (9th June). Where Arabic courses were requested there where hints, however this could be seen as well as a need.
Centro Islamico Boliviano	Can be perceived in the way members support and ask for the offline activities of the space. But is not strong.
Centro Cultural Islamico (Sufi)	There is not evidence of attachment to the space.
Asociación Centro Cultural Islámico de Medellín	There are few posts where emotional attachment can be seen, these belong more to the offline space rather to the e-space.
Asociacion Islamica de Cuba	There is not evidence of emotional attachment.
Centro Islamico de Ecuador	Attachment was not expressed on the space emotional attachment to the community.
Centro Islamico de Guayaquil	Emotional attachment can be seen that there are many shared stories like, shahahdat, talks, meals, and others that show the relation of the publics with the space, although the events are done offline.
Asociacion Islamica de Honduras	There is not evidence to proof that there is emotional attachment to the space.
Instituto de Lengua y Cultura	There is not evidence of emotional attachment in the virtual space, but it seems that member have emotional attachment to the center in the offline arena,

Arabe	because they express missing the classes.

Emotional attachment was found but is not clear if corresponds to the online or offline community.

The obligation or commitment showed by the members in the communities is an indicator of sense of virtual community; it can be seen in the responses and the way they do it.

Table 21: Obligation Observations Found About the Latino Muslim Spaces

Organization	**Obligation**
Islam Para Niños	There is a not manifestation of obligation even from the management that is not supervising the space often and post are posted late.
Centro Islamico Republica de Argentina	There is not evidence of obligation by the members.
Centro Islamico Boliviano	Cannot be perceived.
Centro Cultural Islamico (Sufi)	Obligation was not perceived.
Asociación Centro Cultural Islámico de Medellín	There is a single expression of obligation, can be found in the post and conversation made on 9th June and 26th June can be seen the importance for the members that others attend to the activities at the mosque.
Asociacion Islamica de Cuba	Obligation could not be perceived.
Centro Islamico de Ecuador	Obligation is not expressed and the low reply and engagement suggest that there is not obligation by the members and by the engagement.
Centro Islamico de Guayaquil	There is not evidence of obligation.
Asociacion Islamica de Honduras	Cannot be found.
Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Arabe	Obligation is not seen in the post or comments.

Obligation was only show in the Asociación Centro Cultural Islámico de Medellín where members try to persuade others to attend the activities of the offline space.

The SOVC is presented below indicating which characteristics where present, it is important to point that, the whole post may have only one indication but still is indicated. The SOVC qualification as "NULL" means that none of the SOVC

characteristics were found, “LOW” only one or two were found, “MED” three or four of the characteristics were found and lastly, “HIGH” means that five of the whole characteristics were present on the space. Here the results:

Table 22: *Characteristic of SOVC Found in Each Community and Level of SOVC*

Organization	**Recog.**	**Ident.**	**Sup.**	**Rel.**	**E. Attac.**	**Oblig.**	**SOVC**
Islam Para Niños	-	-	-	-	-	-	NULL
Centro Islamico Republica de Argentina	-	✓	✓	-	✓	-	MED
Centro Islamico Boliviano	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	MED
Centro Cultural Islamico (Sufi)	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	MED
Asociación Centro Cultural Islámico de Medellín	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	HIGH
Asociacion Islamica de Cuba	-	-	-	-	-	-	NULL
Centro Islamico de Ecuador	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	LOW
Centro Islamico de Guayaquil	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	HIGH
Asociacion Islamica de Honduras	✓	-	-	-	-	-	LOW
Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Arabe	-	✓	✓	-	-	-	LOW

Finally to summarize how is the SOVC in the analyzed spaces conclusions are given for each space:

Table 23: *SOVC Conclusions*

Organization	**Conclusion**
Islam Para Niños	All of the characteristics of the SOVC are not present in the space, can be concluded that is a settlement. With no SOVC at all.
Centro Islamico Republica de Argentina	The SOVC was medium as the only characteristics present on the space were identity, support and emotional attachment. However, they had little presence too. Is concluded that there is not sense of virtual community so the space can

	be accounted as a settlement.
Centro Islamico Boliviano	Some of the characteristics of SOVC are seen, but, these are low and are based in offline activities, it might be a sense of community (offline) but cannot be said that a SOVC is fully present online. However can be achieved if management improves the performance in the missing areas of SOVC.
Centro Cultural Islamico (Sufi)	Despite that there is an engagement, the recognition, identity and support shown are low, there is medium SOVC, thus is a settlement. Management should cover the fails in the areas of relationship, emotional attachment and obligation to reach a high level of SOVC.
Asociación Centro Cultural Islámico de Medellín	Even though a SOC can be perceived, and five of the six SOVC's features can be found the appearance is low, do not meet fully the characteristics of SOVC, with a reinforcement of communication may be achieved.
Asociacion Islamica de Cuba	There is no any indication of the characteristics of SOVC at all. It can be considered as a settlement.
Centro Islamico de Ecuador	Despite the volume of post, it can be said that there is not sense of virtual community mainly because there is not engagement and not all characteristics of SOVC are filled, besides there is a lot of information to process for the members, and administration is not fully aware of the interactions by the member also do not promote it. The features of SOVC were recognition and support.
Centro Islamico de Guayaquil	Despite that there is low engagement and management is involved in the space, they need to reinforce the participation and dialogs of the community as a virtual one, not depending on offline actions. The community has presence of the most elements of a virtual community although are low. This can be considered as a community of practice that is based on the offline events. The can enhance the engagement thus the SOVC.
Asociacion Islamica de Honduras	The space does not fill the requirements to have sense of virtual community. However, it could be qualify as a settlement or solidarity community. The space can be cataloged as settlement.
Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Arabe	There is not evidence of the characteristics of the SOVC. Although it can be seen that members treat each other with kindness and care.

The exert of authority or the hierarchy structures are important in any organization to understand the interactions in this case done in the spaces, this two aspects was analyzed through the posts and the messages pointing to characteristics like, commands, leadership, power or control, delegation of power, ranking among the members, superiority or subordination, finding the result below:

Table 24: *Authority or Hierarchy*

Organization	Authority or Hierarchy
Islam Para Niños	There are not indications of hierarchy or authority on the space.
Centro Islamico Republica de Argentina	There is not evidence of it. Even in the discussions the management was not getting involved to end the issue.
Centro Islamico Boliviano	Cannot be perceived any sign of authority or hierarchy.
Centro Cultural Islamico (Sufi)	Authority or hierarchy cannot be perceived.
Asociación Centro Cultural Islámico de Medellín	Cannot be clearly perceive but the following members; Ahmed Dasuki, Anisa Ben Humea and Eduardo Tejada Garcia seems to be kind of leaders or information deliverers due that they make official communications about the activities offline of the group.
Asociacion Islamica de Cuba	There is not authority or hierarchy shown.
Centro Islamico de Ecuador	Authority or hierarchy it was not perceived, although administration participates sometimes.
Centro Islamico de Guayaquil	Authority can be seen when the administration is involved and exert its authority. However is display few times.
Asociacion Islamica de Honduras	There is the management posting but there are not indications of hierarchy, the authority is there but does not show up in a strong.
Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Arabe	Management is aware of the interaction however do no impose authority and hierarchies cannot be seen.

For the study the content type was important to know what formats are more used by these communities, and what are not present or are less used, it was seen that mostly spaces used images and texts, below is shown which type are most used to less used:

Table 25: *Content Type Findings*

Organization	Content type
Islam Para Niños	Most of the posts are external links or videos; some of them do not have even a text explaining what is about the post.
Centro Islamico Republica de Argentina	Mainly the posts were texts with images, then photos mostly without texts, followed by videos and external links.
Centro Islamico	Most of the posts are tightly related to the community, concretely photos of events done. Followed by videos and images with

Boliviano	Islamic information. Most of the posts are accompanied by texts.
Centro Cultural Islamico (Sufi)	There is a strong use of images, followed by links and videos.
Asociación Centro Cultural Islámico de Medellín	Mostly the content is text with images or photos, followed by links from Facebook and videos.
Asociacion Islamica de Cuba	Mainly content is: images some with texts, and 2 posts of pictures and 2 of external links.
Centro Islamico de Ecuador	There is a vast shared videos from other Facebook profiles, as well and images with text.
Centro Islamico de Guayaquil	The most of the posts are images accompanied by texts.
Asociacion Islamica de Honduras	Most of the content type where texts with images, followed by links and photos of the community.
Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Arabe	Mostly the shared images with texts, followed by Facebook links.

In the table can be found indicating which type of content or formats were found used to post the information in the spaces, here many of the listed formats are used by most of the spaces, this are the formats used in the totality of the posts, however can be seen that Facebook events and documents are unlikely used:

Table 26: *Content Type Found in the Posts of The Latino Muslim Space*

Organization	**IMG**	**TXT**	**PHT**	**VID**	**LINK**	**F.EVENT**	**DOC**	**FCBK**
Islam Para Niños	21	10	-	9	24	-	-	1
Centro Islamico Republica de Argentina	101	42	12	8	5	1	-	1
Centro Islamico Boliviano	27	10	26	6	1	-	-	1
Centro Cultural Islamico (Sufi)	10	18	1	3	5	1	-	3
Asociación Centro Cultural Islámico de Medellín	63	54	10	26	10	-	1	41
Asociacion Islamica	2	4	2	-	2	-	-	-

de Cuba								
Centro Islamico de Ecuador	145	131	17	119	5	-	-	263
Centro Islamico de Guayaquil	111	79	10	5	11	2	-	-
Asociacion Islamica de Honduras	11	4	2	0	4	-	-	-
Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Arabe	60	78	9	8	3	4	1	23

The topics were fit into general categories describes previously, the topics touched change community to community, for Latino Muslim the community and Islam are relevant in the spaces, they way they were found in the space is gave in the table below:

Table 27: *Topics Findings*

Organization	**Topics**
Islam Para Niños	The most posted topics are related to Islam like information or Islamic characters stories, then is found content related to the global Islamic community (not the local or in this case the targeted Muslim mothers) and lastly 3 events related to the community (Muslims kids and mothers) are posted on the space.
Centro Islamico Republica de Argentina	The main topics were related to the community and events held offline. Followed by hadith.
Centro Islamico Boliviano	The main topic is the events performed on the community offline, followed by some (but low) Islamic information.
Centro Cultural Islamico (Sufi)	Most of the topics were spiritually in general rather than Islamic. Followed by events.
Asociación Centro Cultural Islámico de Medellín	Most of the topics treat on the space are related to Islamic knowledge, followed by the off line activities of the mosque.
Asociacion Islamica de Cuba	The main topic is the community.
Centro Islamico de Ecuador	The relevant topics were Islam, community follow by Quran and some Hadith and Duas
Centro Islamico de Guayaquil	The most talked topics are about Islamic information, Quran and events done offline.
Asociacion Islamica de Honduras	Main topic was concerned to the Islam, followed in equality by community, Quran and Hadith; Dua was present only in one post.

Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Arabe	All topics were quite balance in the post, however must be highlighted that community topics were more present. Followed in almost equality by, Quran, hadith and Islam.

The topics used by each community in the total post are shown below, it is important to highlight the fact that all spaces used content related somehow to the community, meanwhile topics related to Hadith and Duas (supplications) are less used:

Table 28: *Topics Found in the Total Posts of the Latino Muslim Space*

Organization	Quran	Hadith	Dua	Islam	Event	Community
Islam Para Niños	2	-	-	27	3	8
Centro Islamico Republica de Argentina	3	17	4	2	21	83
Centro Islamico Boliviano	-	-	-	7	7	30
Centro Cultural Islamico (Sufi)	-	-	-	14	4	5
Asociación Centro Cultural Islámico de Medellín	4	11	3	61	33	37
Asociacion Islamica de Cuba	1	-	-	1	-	5
Centro Islamico de Ecuador	28	10	14	114	4	132
Centro Islamico de Guayaquil	36	8	6	42	29	16
Asociacion Islamica de Honduras	2	2	1	5	-	2
Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Arabe	21	26	0	8	16	48

5. RESULTS, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

5.1. Results

One of the first failings of Latino spaces is the lack of basic information, despite that most for them had their logo and addresses, few own history, vision and mission, as well as the name and contact of the person in charge, virtual communities do no provide further information than the one provided automatically by platform, this is important to set who are they and who could join.

Among of the findings regarded to our questions research it was found that some communities use albums to group related pictures. Plus the fact that some of the post studied belong to update of these albums, it can be seen that they often have same reactions, shares and comments.

To be noted, some of the spaces diversity of languages and expressions, which establishes borders not only in communication but also as identity, it could be found that some comments had Arabic words and texts fully in Arabic, it cannot be identified if they were Latinos or Arabs living in Latino America due that identities online can change and be fake, as well very colloquial Spanish statements which denotes culture and history of the countries of these spaces. Now, the research question will be answered with the outcomes of the research:

There is sense of virtual community in the Latino Muslim groups on Facebook?

There is a differentiation between settlements and communities, as well these latter own sub-categories of communities of practice and solidarity. Once analyzed the spaces of the Latino Muslims in Facebook, it could be perceived that despite that they have some community characteristics (that may be present offline) they do not have sense of community, thus they are settlements, however they share characteristic or both Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft communities, such as the relationship, both strong

and weak ties, there are features of practice and solidarity communities based in both virtual world and off line.

- *Is there Recognition of members?*

Recognition was present in six of the ten studied spaces, however it was perceived through tags and comments which indicated the know in person. It was very notorious that members then to recognize highly imams, sheikhs and people from management rather than other members. The communities that do not have any indication of recognition were: Islam para niños, Centro Islamico Republica de Argentina, Asociacion Islamica de Cuba and Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Arabe

- *Is there identity and identification?*

It was found signs and symbols of identity such as Islamic images in the profile picture of the members, Arabic names and writing, Arabic and Islamic expressions, it can be said that some members express their identity through Facebook. However, there were not much statement of self-identity or others identification. Half the communities present any sign of Identity or identification they were: Centro Islamico Republica de Argentina, Centro Islamico Boliviano, Centro Cultural Islamico (Sufi), Centro Islamico de Guayaquil and Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Arabe

- *Is there exchange of support?*

Support was expressed mainly supporting activities (both on/offline), it was seen that many used Arabic expressions like MashaaAllah and Allahu Akbar to encourage members. Only three spaces do not had this characteristic: Islam Para Niños, Asociacion Islamica de Cuba and Asociacion Islamica de Honduras

- *Are there relationship among the members?*

Only two communities show that members had relationship like friendship, they were Asociación Centro Cultural Islámico de Medellín and Centro Islamico de Guayaquil. It was seen that members have relationship among them and with the sheikhs, imams or leaders of the mosque; the language used expressed closeness, respect and appreciation.

- *Is there emotional attachment?*

Emotional attachment was observed in four spaces: Centro Islamico Republica de Argentina, Centro Islamico Boliviano, Asociación Centro Cultural Islámico de Medellín and Centro Islamico de Guayaquil. It is important to underline that some members apparently living abroad these communities expressed to miss the community; perhaps it was not clear it meant the community online or offline. Likewise, some members expressed to miss the activities of the community offline and support them.

- *Is there obligation?*

Obligation was perceived only in Asociación Centro Cultural Islámico de Medellín, where members try to push others to participate in the offline activities of the community.

This is important because the sense of community do not only shapes the experience of the members but also the way they communicate and the schemas they may follow to it. Communities with higher SO(V)C have more involvement and participation thus members are closer to each other. Also they create or develop their own language according to the characteristics as well as the live experiences as a group.

Is there engagement to these types of online groups by its members?

Interactions or links are important to define the community because they represent the communication between members and the space, in the sites it could seen that most of the connections were weak ties lacking of relationships, yet strong ties with relationship among members could be found. To be a real virtual community the commitment and participation by the members is key to maintain the space, in this sense few members were participating beyond than reacting, and it could not be determined who were active or even leaders due to the low involvement. The participations was very low in comments and shares specially, that can be say that the majority of the members were inactive or lurkers which also cannot be defined as far as

he researchers cannot see how many people is actually reading the post. These virtual settlements are weak as far as they are based on geographical communities it might be important to see if the lack of interest and participations is also reflected at the real place.

What are the practices, content and topics used on e-spaces in Facebook by Latino Muslim e-communities?

It could not be seen if the spaces had practices regarding to communication, only the Centro Cultural Islamico (Sufi) seems to have the same activity often and the Centro Islamico de Guayaquil likes most all of the comments done by the members to its pots.

Regarding to the content, they use many formats, but yet the main are images and text; info-graphics, animations, audios were never used. The topics are tightly related to the religion Islam, like verses, actions or sayings of their prophet as well as relevant information for the and about the community. It is important to highlight the appeal to universal values like, good behavior, solidarity, generosity and others that were included in the post and in some cases through Islamic stories and teachings.

One of the functions of management is to create significant content for the members, however administrators do not do it rather than copying texts and sharing external material. There is not a full use of the Facebook tools, for instance the Fanpage are used to propagate events but most of them they do not use the tool "create an event"; in the cases it was used the engagement was very low. Also it is seemed that persons in charge of the communication in the e-spaces are not fully aware of the interventions done by its members.

Are there discussion structures, who and what, in the Latino Muslims communities online?

There are not practices or discussion structures in these spaces. Managers do not have strong commitment with the posting and monitoring of responses, in fact there was not evidence of members executing tasks or having rolls.

Is there authority or hierarchy in Facebook groups?

Despite that was expected some type of surveillance by Islamic authorities in the minorities' spaces as I was found on the literature, the presence of external authorities was null. Power struggles among the members were not found during the analysis; members do not seek to establish themselves as authorities nor the management neither, in fact, there is not any type of visible norms or rules to follow up.

Although was suggested that international Islamic authorities may have any influence in virtual environments, in the minorities in Latin America no indicators were found, in fact the communities seems to support each-other and some of what could be called a discussion structure, was build with the events or material from others Latino spaces, literature tell us that in virtual communities anyone can become a leader which is a decentralized authority, in part, thanks to the fast release and dissemination of information given not only by the organizations but also strongly by the public. These new figures (leaders) may emit whichever judgments and commentaries going beyond of organizations posture. Thus, similar sites tend to be networked as in Latino America where leaders are starting to link each other.

Are built Links between Latino Muslims e-communities and the broader Muslim (e-) communities? If so, what are they for?

The relations or alliances with broader Muslim (e-) communities in fact were poor, it was expected to find highly support from Arab countries and organizations, due that the phenomena was found previously by other researchers in Europe specially in money flows, which could be not only represent a way of financing these Latino communities but also source of information and education. It was found that only Turkish Precedence of Religious Affairs (DIYANET) and Saudi Arabian government

are involved in two of the communities studied giving support for the Islamic festivities. However, the influence of these governments in the Islamic education, material and dissertation of information cannot be evaluated due to the lack of data.

5.2. Discussion

The lack of official information sources about Muslims in Latin America despite their origin, make hard to obtain statistics about these communities, few countries in Latin America have up-dated census and other information about them can be found in American researcher centers being also insufficient and old. Besides, Muslims immigrant or "los turcos" (as are called too) in the continent own now up to a second or third generation which imply that they are not Arab anymore although many remain as Muslims. This study did not included communities which majority where immigrants such as Arabs or "turcos" due that these communities mainly speak other languages like Arabic or even Urdu.

Analyzing the use of Facebook given by the Arabs in Latin America would be a new trend in Diasporas researches it also could open the debate of immigrant communication through new media..

Although Latino Muslims communities would fulfilled the whole characteristics of SO(V)C, it would be hard to sort out if there are strictly communities of practice or solidarity, due that they share characteristic of both. In fact they seems to be very heterogeneous, because of the members involvement and needs.

The recognition of members of the community was very low, in those where was found the offline activities seems to play an important roll on the community, one then may ask if members of Latino Muslim communities do not know each-other offline would not they recognize each-other?

When it comes to identity, it is questionable how reliable is the identity presented in the Facebook profiles due that anyone can fake it. In fact it is wide known that many Muslim woman use other's women pictures in their social networks in order to no

reveal their faces online. As well, identity creation and sense of community of Arab offspring generations in the continent could be explored. Members did not show to have commonly relationships on the Latino Muslim spaces, even the Latino and Arab Muslims seems to remain separated or with low involvement at least in the virtual environment, however, this is what this research found as a public content, it could not be assured that there are not relationships at all among the members due that they may develop or express them in offline spaces. In the other hand, Muslim Facebook users may use the private messenger to establish relationships with the members. The emotional attachment is very important for the community, although the members play an important roll, managers should play the principal staring. Manager can influence dramatically the engagement in the community and consequently make members to feel emotional attachment to the space. Obligation however, is the result of meeting all the previous characteristics, members, cannot feel any commitment to a space that do not offer them an added value. Most of the spaces analyzed principally share other site content and do not watch the community.

Even though if these Latino Muslims communities would fulfilled the whole characteristics of SO(V)C (that were found in this study very low) it would be hard to sort out if there are strictly communities of practice or solidarity, due that they share characteristic of both. In fact they seems to be very heterogeneous, because of the members involvement and needs.

As it was shown, few Latino Muslim communities on Facebook shared the characteristics of the SOVC, like support, recognitions and relationship in a low way but still present. However, the identity singularities remained as the less perceived supporting the idea that one of the biggest challenge is create an authentic identity in virtual spaces as well as understand them. Is very hard to establish if the members are real and if they are not faking their identities due that these networks allow to control what is shown and how the own image is perceived by others, despite the use of Arabic names and images with Islamic content it was impossible for this research qualify or verify the Islamic identities of the Facebook users in this spaces, although people seem to incorporate their offline habits into the virtual world and vise-versa.

The Latino Muslim e-spaces really lack from a leader who can guide them rather than the figure of administration which was having as well a very low or none participation in the conversations, perhaps for being ignored or because there is not an effective use of the tools given by Facebook, managers of the Latino Muslim spaces must have good decision regarding to what and how the post in the spaces, due that the discussion structure they use will show the both side of the organization, the private and public identity. For instance as mentioned before, some spaces (most of them) do not use the tool offered by Facebook to crate events, if well, technology have been shaped to fit in specific groups even religious keeping their own characteristics these communities do not explode the facilities given. It can be questioned how successful are in reality these events? Or if they reach the entire community including those who are lurkers.

The idea that the lack of resources and inconstancy by the communication staff are present in the virtual spaces, is supported when members are who generate content not the management who perform an empirical manage of the platform, making these communities weak since the work mostly is done voluntarily motivated by the interest and remain as an reflection of the pre-existing geographical communities.

It is interesting that despite that all groups shared in majority same culture and religion, the results changed from space to space. For instance the Sufi community does not used Islamic content instead was more focused to spirituality and values. Besides the management of the communities in Mexico and Guayaquil (Ecuador) was more aware of the interaction than other communities meanwhile for communities as the one in Bolivia the generate their own content and use community events to engage members. All these differences lead us to wonder why the results changed from spaces to space? For instance, is this a technical problem? Or, might it be related to the local culture of each country? If so, it would be also thought provoking to compare the immigrant Arab Muslim communities between them and with the Latino ones, in order to see how much the results differ.

Previous studies told us that an adaptation of the Islamic jurisprudence was present in new contexts, like restriction of images use and private messages, gender

segregation specially for women, etc. which reinforced by censoring, Islamic advises and proofs, however the analysis do not cast out such findings in the Latino Muslim communities, one may think that is more likely to find such results in Arab Muslim communities. Alike to the theory found, this is a failing due that there is nothing that designates what is right or wrong, besides the content, there was few references to Sunnah or Quran when discussion were present, although in previous researches it was found in forums and groups.

5.3. Conclusion

This study seeks to address the current situation of Latino Muslims in virtual environments, not only from a theoretical perspective but also from practice. Spaces in Internet have been cataloged as third spaces for societies that adopt a new culture, in this case a new religion for the Latinos. One of the objectives of this work was to study the sense of community in internet, as well as, aspects like, the discussion structure, authority and linkages with other communities, to achieve this, previous studies about religion and internet were found and read in order to gain knowledge about past works and findings by other researchers, establishing a qualitative method for the research due that studies regarding to the topic and the population could not be reached.

Along the literature review and investigation, online religion as the experience and the religion online as the information source were described. The first, giving the option of having online meetings, ceremonies and rituals, and the opportunity of the virtual reality, and the second as the information which can be reached by the Internet.

Religion may be a extend topic, the research focus in the literature that main topic was Islam in Internet. The investigation starts with the history of Islam in Internet, which has three stages: the first, when the Muslims students abroad (specially Europe and United States of America) who started to upload Islamic

information in servers. The second, is when Muslims around the world get aware of the relation between religion and culture, starting to distinguish them and adaptation both in local and international environments, in this period Islamic authorities get involved online and launched Islamic websites as well, in order to solve the issues related to Muslims daily life in non-Muslim countries. The last stage, Muslims find a balance and the focus in what is concerning to global issues, besides, the user generated content change the game, minimizing somehow the authority due that anyone can create the content, reach it and become a leader, this stage is present still. In these sense can be seen the appearance of websites, blogs, forums, groups and of course the Islamic authority start to play roll in surveillance in Islamic countries mean while establishing links with non-Muslim countries; parallel to it there is a big release of fatwas specially for immigrants about daily life in non-Muslim countries.

Aiming to understand what are the communities online, information was gathered. In the first stage it was important to understand what is a community and what characteristics makes it different from any group of people or settlement. Inside this topic an approach was made in minorities and the use of Internet as a third space, due that the Latino Muslims are a minority in the continent. It can be seen that minorities use Internet as a media of self-expression, self-identification and a space to interact with others. Briefly, a depiction of religious community was done in which is explained how people use Internet to express their religiosity. Entering in our most specific topic: Islam; was described how Muslims abroad or from non-Muslim countries have used Internet to demonstrate their beliefs.

Once understood what was a community, it is explained the terms Gemeinschaft (Community) and Gesellschaft (society), being the first a group of people that words for a common goal, meanwhile the second are established by personal interests. Their characteristics are explained too, like the strong ties and weak ties that are mainly translated as the long term or strong personal relations (strong ties), and the relations or interaction done by an interest or a specific need

and are a temporal (weak ties). Also is explained how solidarity is carried on in these communities.

The most important matter perhaps, is the sense of community. What makes a person to feel part of? The SOC tell us that member should feel membership, influence, fulfillment of need and share emotional connection, in the geographic communities. For the virtual communities similar features are needed, users must feel recognition, identification, support, relationship, emotional attachment and obligation, these are the requirement to have sense of virtual community. SOC and SOVC are similar and may share qualities, but in any case all are required. To achieve the SOVC, it is important to have a good management relation and maintenance. The first one refers mainly to connectivity, conversations, content creation and collaboration; while, the maintenance suggest a support exchange, create and make identifications, and the production of trust.

The investigation was carried out in Latino Muslim communities excluding Caribbean countries as well those who were not Spanish speakers. Based on the contact information provided by the Presidency of Religious Affairs (DIYANET) about the "First Latin American Muslim Religious Leaders Summit" and the material collected in the "First Congress of Latino Muslim Women in Latin America" in Mexico City, invitations were extended to the communities in order to get their official sites in Facebook and analyze them, due that the information provided by the Presidency of Religious Affairs (DIYANET) did not included their spaces in Facebook. 31 organizations were invited but only ten of them answered and fit into the requirements for the research (having a space in Facebook active 2 months or more of the months of the research). 910 posts were classified and analyze according to the previous settled categories a new ones were included when needed. In overall the spaces have a low engagement, there is not presence of authority, the formats used are mainly texts and images, the topics are mainly related to the community and Islamic information and, the linkages with other communities are few and cannot be determined if there are real alliances or it was a merely share of information.

Some of limitation of these research were cited in the previous pages, however to reach the communities supposed some troubles, for instance, once making the research on Facebook, in a single place can be up to 5 spaces which had the common members, this make difficult to know which one was the official one, this lead to the need of an official source, though it could not be reached through internet. Finally it was decided to contact Presidency of Religious Affairs (DIYANET) and organization in Mexico, aiming to have from a reliable source the links on Facebook. However, most of the communities even neither answer to our messages, thus few communities could be reached. From a methodological perspective, the topic of virtual communities have few information, leaving for the research as model to follow the one established by Blanchard and Markus 2002.

Although all the analysis was done manually, reactions, shares and number of comments could use a computer program in order to gain time, due that the volume of data was very big to handle. However, the content like, images, videos and comments, must be done manually, to categorize them. Finally, some post and comments, although the researcher manage English and Spanish language in a high level, the comments in Arabic must be re-check by a community member due that the Arabic level of the researcher was basic.

The main deficiency points to management, who in the most of the spaces were not fully involved and aware of the interactions of the space. If Latino Muslim spaces do not own a professional in the area or lack of time, they can approach neighbor communities and schedule the posts in order to minimize work and use time efficiently.

5.4. Suggestions

Accordingly to the literature read, communities can be formed online. The studied spaces gave results showed that the communities have some of the

characteristic of a community but do not fit fully in the description of sense of virtual community, what could lead us to think that maybe Islamic online communities are starting to develop in Latin America, it would useful to study other minorities Islamic communities in non-Muslim countries to compare their development. Once comparing literature with findings many questions are arose. For instance, how many of the members of these communities are really Muslims? Are they simply interested in the Islam or the culture? If the quantity is important, the low engagement and participation could not be understood. Due that the research was qualitative, it would be interesting analyze which type of post (images, videos, links, etc.) do create more reactions and conversations in the Latino spaces. The fact that the base of these communities are the offline spaces, one could question how reliable could be having Islamic communities which do not share any physical space as it is presented by the literature, would they be the Latino Muslim virtual communities successful without offline activities?

An important part of the success of the community lies on the management, if the management do not have plenty knowledge about the platform it could be inferred as the cause of the low participation. If by the contrary managers are communication professionals, it might study what is the cause member to not participate actively?

Other factor which could change the result of any possible research is that in the Latino Muslim spaces, one person could belong to many spaces, if this single person is an active participant but do not belong geographical to Latin America this cannot give 100% accurate results. The involvement or collaboration by external organization may have an effect on the activities and discussion structure of the communities, as well the information provided to the believers, this might have consequences in the behavior and beliefs, also at the cultural adaptation level.

The aim of this work is to contribute to the Latino Muslims communities in Latin America to improve the sense of virtual community, for this is suggested that these spaces should work independently of their geographical partners, it does not mean those cannot be a support. The offline activities may improve the

engagement, for instance people seems to like more pictures of their own and their activities, rather than external content, this advantage can be explode more to improve engagement, it would be important for future research to study the relation Off / Online, thus that these communities need the support of the offline activities as a based to exist.

It would be interesting to analyze which formats (images, videos, text, links, etc.) are more successful for the engagement. Management should improve the SOVC in religious communities using material that is relevant to them and create meaningful conversations and discussions. To incentive the dialog administration can make questions or debates about Islamic points of view regarding to debatable topics, for instance organ donations.

The discussion structures or plan can boost the participation, some suggestions are: tag members who may be interested in the posts, use Islamic information as part of the agenda, like the prayer times, voluntary fasting, suggested prayer like chapter “kafirun” on Friday, use of movies with arabic-islamic themes, videos or tutorials about food or DIY, material for teaching and kids, spread online activities like video-conferences and talks. Groupware is a method that can be used to improve enhance participation in small communities, this basically raises awareness about the things members share in common, some of the suggestions are identity issues, group and individual stories, common goals and activities (Memmi, 2006). Besides, manager should pay attention to the Facebook statistics to improve their performance and target their public, Facebook provides free auto-generate information of the whole site that can be use to strength weak practices and enhance the SOVC.

A successful discussion structure required that Latino Muslims e-space establish their mission and values, as well as manual behavior and other characteristics of the space. It seems that many of the spaces do not have clear what is the purpose of owning these spaces (communication, information, solidarity, etc.), and this make unclear what they want to achieve and who is its public.

Topics and formats should be analyzed to see what are more appealing to members, thus more categories should be included such as, news, update / change cover, memories, notes, etc. Topics related or relevant for the community, such as politics, veil, values, Muslim figure stories, society, etc. should be included in the agenda of the spaces.

Gender studies could research of the roll of the Latino Muslim woman in these communities, for instance the person in charge of the community in Honduras is a woman with a high leadership. Beside, how culture is adopted and the development of a Latino Muslim identity? Muslims in this side of the world are trying to figure out their individuality away from Arabic culture.

In these type of communities which are form from minorities and immigrants it would be interesting to observe the relation between ethnic and religion, it means how Arab, how Latino or how Islamic are these spaces or the renegotiation of identity through the use of technology. This also led to the theoretical part of the differentiation between knowledge, education and language knowledge and how this influences the leadership or authority in virtual Islamic spaces.

It would be interesting to study how much involvement has the Saudi Arabian and Turkish government as in these communities as well as the influence that they may make on them. Besides, the links that are established with other governments and organizations abroad of Latin America can be studied too.

A focus in new technology tools is required also, for instance despite that Facebook has still a big weight in todays world, many people is using faster communication like “What’s App” or Apps, and in fact many organization create groups to reach people efficiently faster.

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ANEXES

ANEX 1 **:** List Provided By DIYANET (Word document)

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