**Carmen**

**How are we growing old in cyberspace?**

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**Abstract**

*Introduction:* Cyberspace is a platform which determines us for many decades. Socialization takes place not only in school, workplace, or family, but also in social media which means that every age group is affected.

*Aim:* The aim of the paper is to pop up questions in connection with growing old in cyberspace with the help of a work of art of Stromae.

*Methodology:* The videoclip can be considered as a short content of the critical view of Twitter. In Hungary this platform hasn't been so popular, however, it is a symbol of social media thus it can be interpreted to the tendencies that can be seen worldwide. The materials of the analysis are the pictorial representations of the videoclip, while the analytical tool is the theory and practice of social representations.

*Theoretical background:* To analyze the work of art, theories in connection with socialization and social representation are used in order to have a deeper understanding of processes of consumer

society while aging. Life events - birthdays, eating out and visiting cinema - are enhanced to see examples of possible individual failures and also the extension of these failures to society.

*Conclusion:* The visual representation of pop music plays a socially responsible role that affects all age groups. Raising awareness about responsible use of social media should not only be limited to young people in the future but also extended to the elderly as vulnerable social groups of society.

## Carmen
## Hogyan idősödünk a cybertérben?

**Kulcsszavak:** idősödés; cybertér; közösségi média.

## Absztrakt

*Bevezetés:* A cybertér olyan platform, amely évtizedek óta meghatároz minket. A szocializáció nemcsak az iskolában, a munkahelyen vagy a családban megy végbe, hanem a közösségi médiában is, s ezzel minden korosztály érintett.

*Cél:* A tanulmány célja, hogy Stromae *Carmen* című művészeti alkotásának segítségével olyan kérdéseket vessen fel, amelyek a cybertérben való öregedéssel kapcsolatosak.

*Módszertan:* A videoklip a Twitter kritikájának tekinthető. Magyarországon ez a platform nem örvend annyira nagy népszerűségnek, mint néhány más országban, azonban a közösségi média szimbólumának lehet tekinteni ebben a kontextusban. Az elemzés alapját a videoklip képi ábrázolásai adják, az analitikus eszköztár pedig a szociális reprezentációk elméletét és gyakorlatát foglalja magában.

*Elméleti háttér:* A művészeti alkotás elemzéséhez olyan elméletek állnak rendelkezésre, amelyek a szocializációval és a szociális reprezentációval kapcsolatosak, annak érdekében, hogy mélyebb megértést szerezzünk a fogyasztói társadalom folyamatairól és az ilyen társadalomban való idősödésről. Néhány életesemény - születésnap, étkezés és mozi - hangsúlyával példák kerülnek bemutatásra, melyek fókusza a lehetséges egyéni kudarcok és ezek kiterjesztésére a társadalom egészére.

*Következtetés:* A popzene képi megjelenítése társadalmi felelősségvállaló szereppel is bírhat, mely minden korosztályt érinthet mint befogadót. A közösségi média használatával kapcsolatos

tudatosságra való figyelem felkeltése a jövőben nem csak a fiatalokra, hanem az idős korúakra is ki kellene terjedjen mint a társadalom sérülékeny társadalmi csoportjaira.

## Introduction

The pop song *Carmen* (2015)[1] by Stromae (a Belgian musician, Paul Van Haver) has its own historical sources in arts as the title is the same as one of Georges Bizet's operas[2]. The aria *L'amour est un oiseau rebelle* (1875) discusses the meaning of love. The song, also known as *Habanera*, is sung by the character Carmen, who expresses her views on love. Carmen sees love as a rebellious bird that no one can tame, symbolizing her belief in love as independent and free, something that cannot be contained or controlled (Melchiori, 2018). However, in the music video of the song *Carmen* composed by Stromae, the concept of love is presented differently. Stromae uses the metaphor of a bird, similar to Bizet's opera. In this case, the bird is likened to the Twitter logo. The song lyrics state:

> *"L'amour est comme l'oiseau de Twitter*
> *On n'est bleu de lui, seulement pour 48 heures"*[3]

This statement suggests a critique of love in the age of social media when feelings can be fleeting and superficial. For Hutcheon (2013: 23), adapters "*make selections that not only simplify, but also expand and go beyond, make analogies, criticize, show their respect*". This can be seen in the song *Carmen* by Stromae when the author - from the poles of Gypsy love and Christian love - portrays a new conception of love, this time addressing love for social networks.

## Methodology

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[1] The song was released in 2013, while the videoclip in 2015.

[2] The opera is an adaptation of the novel *Carmen*, which was written in 1845 by Prosper Mérimée. When Mérimée portrayed the story of the Gypsy woman, called Carmen, the theme was in vogue in the literature of the 19th century; as an example, one can cite in French literature the character Esmeralda, a character from the novel Notre Dame de Paris (1831), and in Brazilian literature, Capitu, a Machadian character known for her Gypsy eyes.

[3] *"Love is like the bird of Twitter*
*We are blue for it, only for 48 hours"*

## 1. Figure: Selfies



Analyzing a music video like *Carmen* has many potentials. However, in this paper I will take into consideration intertextuality, multimodality and intermediation to reveal the processes of socialization with the help of (pictorial and linguistic) social representations (Moscovici, 1984).

Intertextuality can be conceptualized according to Genette (2010), who divided it into two types: explicit and implicit. He named it *explicit* when the source text of the intertext was mentioned, either through citation, quotation marks or references; and *implicit* when there is no mention of the source text. According to these categories, the topics of the article will be discussed using this model.

Music videos can be considered as a hybrid genre of work of arts. They are also essentially multimodal, considering that they work with various modes (gestures, intonations, words, texts, etc.) and various languages (oral, written, imagistic). Mozdzenski (2013) considers that music videos are good materials to investigate multimodality, precisely for this reason. The researcher points out an element called "accessory verbal texts" which are "*for example, accidental dialogues or graphic textual elements integral to the images of the music video itself*" (Mozdzenski, 2013: 104).

According to Clüver (2011), intermediation implies all types of "inter-relationship and interaction between media". Rajewsky (2015), points out *three categories of intermediation*, the first, a more restricted sense of transposition; the second, a restricted sense of media combination and the third, in the most restricted sense of intermedia references. The transposition of *Carmen* (opera) to the music video fits the third definition, as the author believes that intermedia references have to be "*understood as strategies of meaning production that contribute to the total signification of the product*" (Rajewsky, 2012).

SRT is a social psychological theory, however, according to Moliner (2020), we should look for its origins in sociology. Simmel (1908) was the first to recognize the connection between the distance of the individuals and their environment as a form of alienation. As his concept states, the way the individual represents oneself also shapes one's mutual actions, thus revealing connection points in society.

Moscovici describes social representations as well-organized sets of knowledge that flow through the relationships of individuals in the form of information, opinions and beliefs, among other crucial aspects. From this point of view, social representations can be considered as cognitive structures (Moliner 2020). The environment that determines the maintenance of consistencies in the framework of the theory of social representations means, in terms of cognitive structures, where the individual places the object in the process of anchoring and objectification. Once objectification is achieved, one must strive for harmony, both in the internal world and in the relationship with the environment, in accordance with the principle of cognitive coherence. Although, social representation has new aspects in terms of the content of organization, its social origin, and the content of constitution (László 1999: 30). Henri Tajfel and his colleagues (1984) list the social psychological traditions that include both an emphasis on the content focus and the origin of social representations.

**Discussion**

*How the time passes by in cyberspace - the features of humans and social media*
Social relationships are important in our lives at every stage of life. Thus, these belong to the core elements of aging well, too (Leist, 2013). However, what happens with people whose social relationships are restricted to social media at a considerable level? In *Carmen* we can follow the

main character growing old with a bird. The animal – as a symbol of the importance of social media in his life – not only lives with him but also occupies his life as time passes by.


*Consumer society*

**2. Figure: More and more followers**



The advent of the digital age has significantly transformed the way individuals interact, communicate and consume. This transformation is not confined to younger generations; older adults are increasingly engaging with digital technologies becoming active participants in consumer society within cyberspace (Nimrod, 2017).

The proliferation of digital technologies has created a new form of consumer society characterized by online shopping, digital entertainment, and social media interactions. Older adults, often stereotyped as technologically averse, are increasingly embracing these digital platforms (Jung, Sundar, & Hochheiser, 2017). This shift is reshaping the traditional understanding of aging, as older adults are no longer passive recipients of care but active consumers in the digital marketplace (Nimrod, 2017).

Consumer society in cyberspace offers older adults opportunities for social engagement, learning, and entertainment. Social media platforms, for instance, provide a space for older adults to maintain social connections, engage in discussions, and express their identities (Jung et al., 2017). Moreover, digital platforms offer a plethora of learning opportunities, enabling older adults to acquire new skills and knowledge, thereby challenging the stereotype of cognitive decline associated with aging (Nimrod, 2017).

However, the integration of older adults into consumer society in cyberspace is not without challenges. Digital literacy is a significant barrier, with older adults often struggling to navigate the complex digital landscape (Jung et al., 2017). Furthermore, the consumer society often

prioritizes youthfulness, potentially marginalizing older adults and reinforcing ageist stereotypes (Nimrod, 2017).

In conclusion, growing old in cyberspace presents both opportunities and challenges. While the consumer society in cyberspace offers older adults avenues for social engagement, learning, and consumption. It also presents barriers related to digital literacy and ageism. Future research and policy should focus on addressing these challenges to ensure that older adults can fully participate in consumer society within cyberspace.

*Representation of life events on social media*

3. **Figure: Birthday, eating out and cinema**



Digital age has brought a shift in the way life events are represented and shared, with social media platforms becoming the primary stage for such displays. This shift is not exclusive to younger generations; older adults are increasingly utilizing these platforms to share and commemorate their life events (Jung, Sundar, & Hochheiser, 2017).

Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have become digital scrapbooks, where users, including older adults, document significant life events, from birthdays and anniversaries to retirements and grandchild births. These platforms offer a unique opportunity for older adults to share their experiences, maintain social connections and leave a digital legacy (Jung et al., 2017).

The representation of life events on social media by older adults challenges traditional notions of aging. It demonstrates that older adults are not merely passive observers of life, but active participants in the digital world, sharing their experiences and engaging with others (Nimrod, 2017). This active participation in the digital sphere can

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contribute to a sense of belonging and community, which is crucial for psychological well-being in later life (Nimrod, 2017).

However, the representation of life events on social media also raises concerns. The pressure to present a positive image on social media can lead to selective self-presentation, where only positive aspects of life are shared, potentially creating a distorted representation of aging (Jung et al., 2017). Furthermore, privacy concerns may deter older adults from sharing personal life events on social media, limiting their participation in these digital spaces (Nimrod, 2017).

In conclusion, growing old in cyberspace and the representation of life events on social media present both opportunities and challenges for older adults. While social media offers a platform for sharing and commemorating life events, concerns about self-presentation and privacy may limit its use. Exploring strategies to support older adults in navigating these digital spaces safely and authentically would be crucial for future research.

*Individual failures – the paradox of connectivity and alienation in relationships*

**4. Figure: Relationships destroyed by social media**



The advent of digital technology has transformed the way we communicate and maintain relationships. For older adults, the digital world offers opportunities to stay connected with family and friends, combat loneliness, and engage in social activities (Jung, Sundar, & Hochheiser, 2017). However, the digital realm also presents challenges that can lead to individual failures and alienation in relationships.

While social media platforms provide a means to maintain connections, the nature of these digital interactions can sometimes lead to feelings of alienation. The impersonal nature of online communication can lead to misunderstandings and misinterpretations, potentially causing strain in relationships (Nimrod, 2017). Moreover, the digital divide, characterized by a lack of digital literacy or access to technology, can exacerbate feelings of alienation among

older adults, as they may struggle to keep up with the rapid pace of technological change (Jung et al., 2017).

Research has shown that excessive use of digital technology can lead to neglect of face-to-face interactions, resulting in weakened social ties and feelings of loneliness and isolation (Turkle, 2011). This paradox of connectivity, where increased digital connections lead to decreased real-world connections, can be particularly detrimental for older adults, who may rely heavily on close social ties for emotional support and companionship.

Furthermore, the pressure to present a positive image on social media can lead to selective self-presentation, where only positive aspects of life are shared. This can create a distorted representation of reality, leading to feelings of inadequacy and alienation (Nimrod, 2017). While the digital world offers opportunities for older adults to stay connected, it also presents challenges that can lead to individual failures and alienation in relationships. Strategies to support older adults in navigating the digital world, such as digital literacy programs and user-friendly technology design, are crucial to mitigate these challenges.

It is not surprising that these means of communication make mention of big names in the artistic, political and social world of the time in which we live. And this is also a device employed by the animation script writers: while the character Stromae rides on his bird, on the same polluted trail with billboards and arrows, important and globally known personalities appear. The first is *Orelsan* - a singer who helped in making of the music video -, then Canadian singer *Justin Bieber* followed by the American couple *Beyonce* and *Jay-Z* riding on a single bird and hugging; then appears the singer *Lady Gaga* and after, on an extremely large bird, the former president of the United States of America, *Barack Obama*; at this moment, the camera focuses on his face while he is looking into it. Finally, on a very small bird, the figure of *Queen Elizabeth*, English monarch, is shown and, gently, she smiles at the camera.

It is at this moment that intertextuality helps to highlight the disapproval of the abusive use of social networks. All these people are influential figures and known in the world in which we live and most of them have a profile on social networks exemplified in the song. Each one is riding on a bird of different size, each proportion of the bird alludes to the influence that each character has in real life. However, this influence ends up not being important, because they are all going the same way and will have the same path.

These elements are capable of exemplifying how multimodality becomes important to construct the criticism proposed by Paul Van Haver. On the posters phrases are written  like "*friend or follow*", "*free WIFI*" in addition to several arrows pointing to the direction that the bird is following. Parallel to the scenes, the rhythm of the song has an increase in speed along with the lyrics that repeat the following verses, thus intensifying the rhythm of the song "*et    c'est    comme    ça    qu'on    s'aime,    s'aime,    s'aime,    s'aime. Comme ça, consomme, somme, somme, somme, somme*".[4]

*The extension of failures to society*

5. **Figure: Famous people, unknown ends**
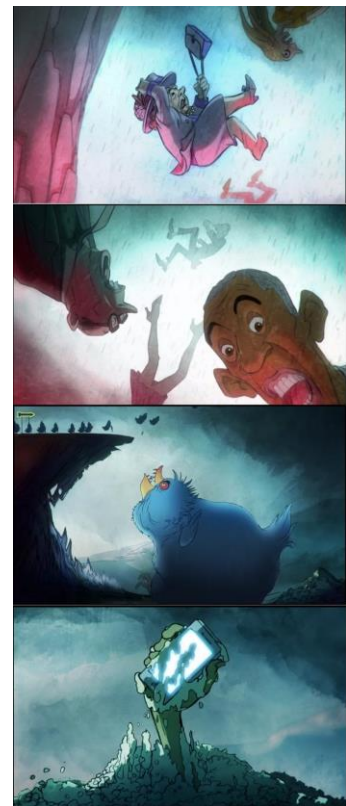


The advent of the digital age has significantly transformed the way society operates, including how we age. As we grow older in a world increasingly dominated by cyberspace, the societal implications of our digital interactions become more pronounced. One such implication is the extension of individual failures to society, particularly in the context of older adults' engagement with digital technologies.

The digital divide, which refers to the gap between those who have access to digital technologies and those who do not, is a societal failure that is particularly pronounced among older adults (Friemel, 2016). This divide is not just about access, but also about the ability to effectively use digital technologies. Older adults often face challenges in adopting and using digital technologies due to factors such as *cognitive decline*, l*ack of digital literacy*, and *fear of technology* (Chen & Schulz, 2016). This societal failure to adequately support older adults in their digital engagement can lead to their alienation and marginalization in an increasingly digital society.

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[4] *"and that's how we love, love, love, love.*
*How we consume, -sume, -sume, -sume."*

Moreover, the representation of older adults in cyberspace often reinforces negative stereotypes about aging, further contributing to their marginalization (Leist, 2013). The societal failure to provide positive and diverse representations of older adults in cyberspace can negatively impact their self-perceptions and their interactions with others.

Furthermore, the rise of social media has led to new forms of societal failures. For instance, the pressure to present a positive self-image on social media can lead to feelings of *inadequacy* and *social comparison*, which can be particularly detrimental for older adults who are already dealing with age-related challenges (Nimrod, 2017).

In conclusion, as we grow old in cyberspace, it is crucial to address these societal failures. This includes bridging the digital divide, promoting positive representations of older adults in cyberspace and fostering a more inclusive and supportive digital environment for older adults.

**Conclusion**

The music video of *Carmen* does not fully illustrate what is being sung, a new story is created and complements the lyrics of the song; it articulates with intertextual and multimodal elements present throughout the animation, thus reinforcing the idea that excessive use of social networks ends up destroying a person.

Music videos are, in essence, multimodal genres. In the music video in question, multimodality is present to accentuate various moments of the story (e.g. the section with the posters). The origin of the work of art has a crucial message: every age has its challenge - considering social history or life stages. The content of the videoclip is either preventive and revealing - showing the risks of today's (cyber) society.

**6. Figure: The circle of life ends**

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