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Interactive Comics for Folklore Stories

Arab Families Passing Traditions to Children

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated how Arabic immigrant parents prefer to pass culture to the new generation through digital platforms. The thesis is related to the emerging gamification, which involves the use of interactive comics to support culture transfer among Arab immigrant families. The main objective of the study is to provide an insight into how the immigrant parents perceive the importance of the new technology especially interactive comics in passing cultural heritage.

To achieve the main aim of this study, which is exploring how parents pass culture to the new generation using interactive comics for folklore stories, I relied on a qualitative research method. Guided by phenomenology as a research design, seven participants living in Europe and North America were interviewed using a semi-structured questionnaire to provide in-depth insight into the research phenomena. The interviews were conducted online, which not only improved the confidence and freedom of participants to express their opinions but also enabled the social distancing, which was necessary due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The study has revealed that interactive comics is an important tool in passing culture to the younger generation. Further, the research shows that children prefer interactive comics over the use of books despite concerns regarding the poor design of the apps, especially for passing Arab culture. Given the difficulties in relying on conventional approaches such as storytelling by grandparents, beliefs and morals can be integrated into interactive comics' storylines to improve access and experience of the users.

The practical contribution of the present study involves the need to improve the quality and design of the interactive comics by integrating old storylines which impart morals and cultural beliefs among Arab users living in the diaspora. Therefore, the study remains valuable in designing the new media that is interactive comics in telling folk stories as a medium for passing culture. Meanwhile, the study is limited given the small sample size and a specific focus on Europe and North America which compromise its generalizability. The findings are important in the application development to improve the experience of users.

Keywords: Interactive comics, Arab community, culture, parents, digital

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1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis aims to explore how immigrant parents preserve and pass on their culture, morals, and beliefs to the next generations using interactive comics. Immigrant parents face challenges to keep their culture, language, and beliefs when they live in a new society. They have a desire to pass their own culture to their progeny. Passing on their childhood memories, morals beliefs, and culture by storytelling to the next generation is one of the desires they have. Storytelling can be used as a tool for passing the folk stories as a cultural symbol to the younger generation.

Arabic immigrant parents have different ways of passing their culture to the next generations. Some of these ways include dancing, singing, joke-telling, playing games, celebrating religious occasions, and finally storytelling (historical and imaginary stories). This study focuses on the use of interactive comics for folklore stories in passing culture to the new generation. Further, the main objective of this study is to provide an understanding of how the new technology especially interactive comics can be used in passing cultural beliefs and morals among the Arabic community in Europe / North America.

The technological inclination among the new generation has rendered conventional ways of preserving folklores such as books unattractive to kids. The interactive comics are used to tell stories in interesting ways. Kids from Arabic families in Europe/North America face a greater risk of losing their cultural identity given the influence of movies and western-related stories that are more accessible through tablets, smartphones, and other technology-enabled mediums. The study conducted by Izani and Razak (2003) revealed that there are considerable efforts among content producers to visualize the old content using the new technologies. This has provided a valuable opportunity for preserving folklores and telling the stories in ways that resonate with the new generation of kids. Despite the emerging opportunity to convert folklore into interactive comics, little is known about how Arab parents living in Europe / North America use the new interactive mediums to pass culture to their kids. It is on these grounds that the present study seeks to explore the use of interactive comics for folklore stories in transferring culture to the new generation.

According to Screendiver (2020), comics are graphical tools that are used to convey ideas through images and visualization combined with text. When interactive, they allow readers to interact with the story itself, by actively evolving in the reading process. Digital communities such as Screendiver – the Digital Comics Directory are one of the growing collections of the world's interactive comics. Folklores are stories that people tell orally, rather than in written form. They are related to many storytelling traditions, including fables, myths, and fairy tales. Every society has its folktales. These well-known stories, handed down between generations, are an important way of passing along knowledge, information, and history.

Folk stories are one of the tools to teach language, beliefs, customs, and traditions that parents were brought up with. Tomlinson (2012) who has studied the evolution of storytelling and fairy tales describes how parents use folk stories to pass the culture to their children. Accordingly, it is explained how they are used as a tool for communication between the generations. Folk stories have a lot of Imagination, repetition, and discovery. De Lima (2013) argued that folklores can be presented through interactive comics systems due to their interactive nature in telling a story.

Interactivity in comics and storytelling can make folk stories more dynamic. "Interactivity is something that allows two-way communication between the user/player and the application itself. Interactive storytelling is quite a different matter. A story would require our demand in the storytelling process; they are supposed to act upon us. By adding this feature to the application, the audience has the freedom to control the story's plotline with consequences of their own decision" (Bakhir 2018, 2). The visualization comics provide, distinct them from other methods of storytelling. The comics as a method of storytelling, and in the case of this study, passing on the culture, have the privilege of showing and illustrating meanings rather than only telling stories by words. They have the potential to enhance and improve children's imagination.

> Comic strips don't require long sentences or paragraphs to tell a good story. Only a few words are required for the characters to go about their lives and reveal their stories. Anyone who sees a blank talk or thought balloon floating over the head of a character wants to

> fill it in with words and thoughts; doing so is the first step to telling a story. Comics can be used to teach children how to read and think imaginatively. The comic characters can become their friends and family and open new worlds to them. Kids begin to realize that reading can be fun. By giving them a choice of fun animal and human characters with different emotions—happy, sad, angry, worried—as well as blank thought and talk balloons to fill in with their written words and some story, prompts to spark ideas, youngsters will be able to tap into their creativity to tell and create their own graphic stories. (Zimmerman 2008, 56.)

Another benefit they offer is the potential to enhance communication between parents and children. Storytelling is a method that involves a narrator or a storyteller. In this case, storytelling enables parents and children to talk and communicate more. Comics can be used as a method for teaching a second as well as a third language.

> Creating comic strips encourages youngsters to practice language, reading, writing, and communication skills. They can also be an invaluable tool when teaching English as a second language to young and old alike. (Zimmerman 2008, 56.)

Zimmerman mentions English, whereas, in the case of children of immigrant parents, it can be the language of the country, or a third or fourth.

The parents who have an immigrant background show the willingness to teach the culture, beliefs, and morals to their children by teaching language and telling stories. They are willing to subscribe to digital products, such as TV channels for children or books in their language. Instead of receiving the story only orally, interactive comics provide a visual base, as well as oral features for the kids to get the stories. Further, interactive comics have the potential for visual-based interactions. They add drama to the story by making it visually attractive instead of using only voice to narrate the story.

The thesis focuses on how the immigrant parents pass the morals and beliefs from the previous generations to the young generations using folklore stories. This research paper aims to explore how young parents with immigrant backgrounds use folklore stories to preserve the culture of their progeny. The comic magazines are one of the main sources of entertainment and information for children in Arabic culture. One of the goals of this study the author pursues is to

explore the future marketing potentials for interactive comics. My intent as a novice researcher is to reveal the potential market for a product as such, interactive comics, which can be accessed and offered online.

The main research question is: **How are the cultural beliefs/morals passed to the next generation? How do immigrant parents and children who are born and/or raised in the host country access folklore storytelling and comics?** The study involved the collection of primary data from immigrant families by conducting interviews. The defined target group is young immigrant parents, 40 years old and younger, with at least one child of 12 years old and younger. The selected number of target group families are ten to twelve families. The primary data used in this research is gathered by the method of interviewing. The interview is one of the major sources of information that the thesis works on. The author aims to interview young immigrant parents to gather feedback regarding the "how" and the "why" of their storytelling. The information gathered from the interviews is analyzed through content analysis.

2 RESEARCH AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter defines the keywords Comics, Interactive Comics as well as Folklore Stories. Further, relevant literature has been reviewed to provide an insight into the use of folklore stories in passing culture. Finally, the gaps in the literature are studied to justify the value of this study.

2.1 Comics

Comics are images or graphics, following each other that show art and drama. Comics show ideas with pictures. Classically, they show imagination, fantasy, and impossible worlds. De Lima (2013) provides one of the accepted definitions: "Comics are a narrative form that uses a sequence of panels containing signs and images combined with texts, where the reader perceives time spatially" (De Lima et al. 2013, 235). Comics chronologically combine text and pictures to create a narrative for the audience (Azman et al. 2016, 589). As a result, it makes a connection between creators (writers and drawers) and receivers (the reader) of the art. The process of visualizing comics is to express the drama more fluently. The sequence of the story is told by pictures, which go one by one, making the comics one of the best ways to illustrate a story. They are the result of the imaginations and creativity of the writers and the illustrators

2.1.1 Interactive comics

Interactive comics is a way of showing the text of the story, including dialogues, notes, transaction effects, the characters, and the drama that the story includes. Interactive comics use the interactive technology that the multimedia offers, including, sound, video, animation, visual effect. The use of interactive comics has increased given the new feature that the mobile or tablet has and the speed and availability of the internet in daily life.

> Interactivity can be defined as the degree to, which a communication technology can create a mediated environment in, which participants can communicate (one-to-one, one-to-many, and many-to-many) both synchronously and asynchronously. (Shelton 2009, 18.)

Interactive comics use two types of software; graphic programs, which create the visual part of the comic, and coding software.

> Through the use of engaging cartoons, doubled with interactivity in Webcomics, the users can become a part of the narrative. By becoming a contributor and/or creator of the world of information (within comics), then, the audience begins to become active members in the community of knowledge. (Shelton 2009, 5.)
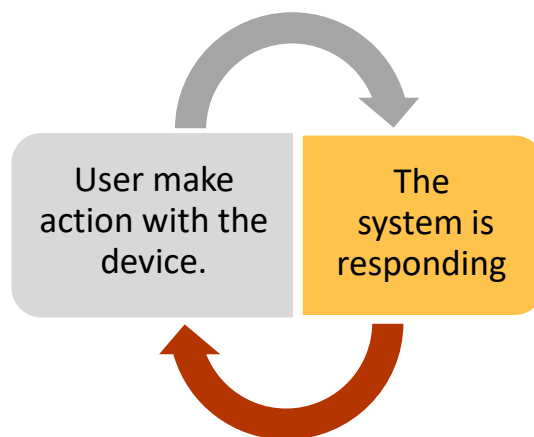

FIGURE 1. The interactive process

(Source: Author)

2.1.2 Folklore stories

Simple talk that comes from old people, becomes a bridge to culture. New generations gain experience through simple easy talk about the past by the oral passing of the stories. The oral culture is passed from generation to generation. In the past, it was the main source of entertainment for children. These stories are told orally by the parents. "Folklore is passed on by means of person to person contact" (Bronner 2007, 58). Folklore stories connect the old and new generations. Folklore stories help in the creation of good interaction among family members. Interactive comics offer the best environment for social interactions on different levels inside the families, to pass the language culture, and experience. Parents

and grandparents like to pass on, and keep the stories running in generations through oral methods.

These stories are not only about the stories themselves. The way the stories are told, the performance of telling the stories, is the main part of it. Oral storytelling creates room for imaginations and opens a platform for the sound effect that the storyteller uses to tell the story. "In oral speech, one can use slang, folk similes (as cool as a cucumber) and folk metaphors" (Bronner 2007, 58).

Folklore stories include drama, suspense, and adventure. Their subjects are mostly about imagination, fantasy, and the past. Bronner (2007, p.1) posited that folklore stories are a source of rich and meaningful values and cognition among the community. Folklore stories create a will for adventure and development when it concerns children and family. They activate unlimited imaginations. Folklore stories are specifically told to children and teenagers. They make the minds of teenagers and children fly.

Folklore stories are

> a superb playground for the imagination, full of wonders and the bizarre, free from the limitations of everyday reality, with layers of meaning the conscious or unconscious mind may discover according to its readiness or need. (Mcglinn 2000, 23.)

They make the experience of older generations real in the eyes of teenagers. Folklore stories create a new culture that includes language, clothes, as well as communication. Folklore stories act as a link between the old culture and the new generations. Therefore, folklore stories are presented in theatres and articles among other forms of literature.

Besides the positive side of folklore stories, it should be noted that they (folklore stories) influence children's thought processes. It implies that the folklore stories have both negative and positive impacts. Folklore stories can control the minds of children. Some stories contain prejudice against people, cultures, or even religions. Each generation adds, removes, and edits some parts of the original stories to their advantages and benefits, which changes the reality and moral of the

stories to align it to the story-tellers' morals or personal purposes and preferences. Loyalty to the original stories and morals are constantly ignored and altered.

2.2   Children and the new media

Like other regions, children from Finland, Luxembourg, and Canada are growing up with media ecology. Young people learn from the sources they have access to. According to Ito (2010), the youth are increasingly engaging in ongoing media such as music or videos. This leads to social and cultural changes. Scholars, parents, and society need to understand the new culture that the younger generation has adopted.

All of the engagement of the new generations with the new media comes because of access to the internet through phones, tablets, and such. According to Shelton (2009), the media continue to play a significant role in defining interactivity through storytelling especially using the internet as a medium.

2.3   Previous relevant work on interactive comics for folklore stories

Shelton (2009) has studied how interactive comics can change culture and society. According to Shelton (2009), Interactive comics create a community and make the reader practice active reading, with a good option to interact with other users through the online platform. The researcher further revealed that interactive comics through the Webcomic creates a potential for social change. Another result of this research was how these comics can be used to reflect hardships such as injustice in society. In this case, Shelton (2009) argued that the comics enable readers to use humour and parody in reflecting on the injustices in society. As a result, the interactive comics provoke readers to promote social change. Regarding social changes, the study further highlighted an underlying theme in comics, which is how the political uncertainties and social injustices are revealed (Shelton 2009, 17). It implies that Comics acts as a platform to address social injustices and political upheavals by engaging readers due to its communicative nature. Therefore, interactive comics have been used often by different people to achieve specific objectives especially in engaging the users.

Additionally, Dittmar (2012) conducted an experimental investigation that revealed the unique features of digital comics compared to the use of books. The study revealed that interactive comics are more attractive since there is media interdependency in, which images are used to tell a story. As a result of the step by step approach to storytelling in digital comics, the users have a unique experience compared to the comics in books (Dittmar 2012, 80). In explaining the variations in the experience of users in digital comics, the re-searcher posited that unlike the books, users can choose the narrative path by pressing a button or sliding an image. It implies that users can decide to follow or ignore the image sequences.

Besides the users' freedom of choice, Dittmar (2012) argued that interactive comics have other components such as multiple colours, different sound effects as well as transition effects that are designed to influence the experience of users (Dittmar 2012, 90). Given the positive experience resulting from the use of interactive comics, they have become more popular compared to books or other literary forms.

A recent study conducted by Zaibon (2019) in evaluating the use of digital comics in the education and entertainment sector revealed an increased advancement in technology concerning various aspects such as sound, image as well as programming, among others. As a result, the existing technological devices such as smartphones, tablets, or personal computers continue to improve access to digital comics. The researcher further pointed out that the structural arrangement of the digital comics is a vital aspect in advancing visual conventions or illustration of a given scene.

These features make interactive comics more entertaining to users who can relate to the description of an event therein. Zaibon (2019) further posited that the visual narrative of the interactive comics largely depends on the design of the page that shows on the page or the user's interface. Additionally, the researcher mentions the significant relationship between Interactivity and comics as modern technology supports the construction and distribution of comics; interactive features allow a spectacular reading experience to users.

Unlike passive digital comics with static visuals, interactive comics incorporate rich multimedia elements content of the video, audio, animation, as well as accepting mouse click, drag, text, and touch input (Zaibon 2019, 590). That implies that the interactive comics provide an opportunity for users to explore various options in terms of colour, font, screen tones, and special effects such as drag and drop tools. Some users prefer audio, or animation (depending on the condition, or preference). Others prefer flat text with a normal transaction between images especially those on visual effects.

Nevertheless, interactive comics are supported by the multi-touch surface on a table or a smartphone, or the interface through the computer mouse on the case of PC. Interactive comics generate rich content for users and creators (designers) as shown in figure 2. It allows for a new kind of relativity, and high innovation gives the two-way communication between the user and the designers. As a result, the services can be publicly accessed in different locations at different times. Therefore, the user gets the privilege to manage the interactive comics with ease regardless of their location
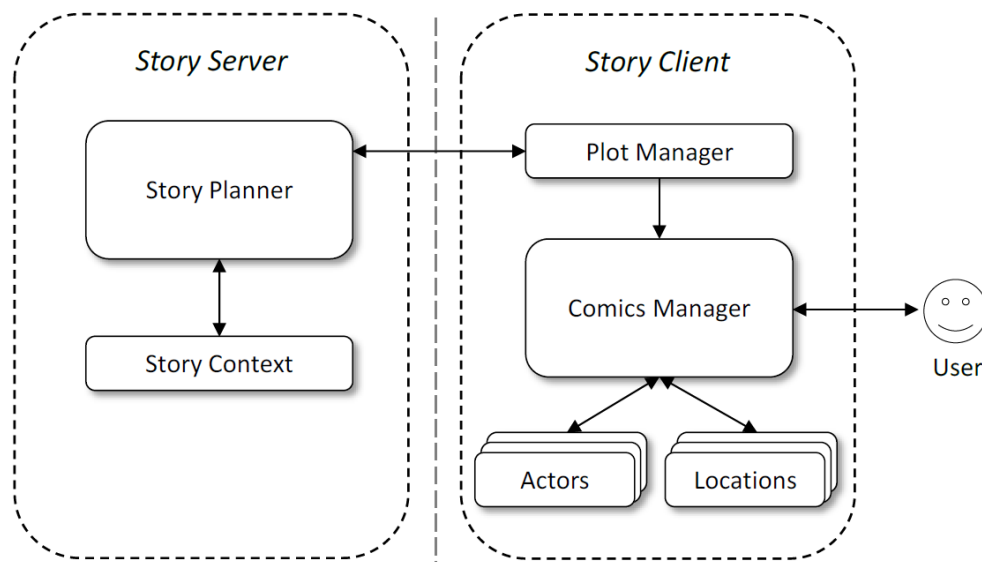
FIGURE 2. The user interactivity with the technology and story context (Zaibon 2019, 590)

2.4 Justification for the master thesis

There is a need to implement the cultural heritage from grandparents and make it acceptable for the new generation. This can be accomplished through interactivity involving the use of a teaching screen. This is part of my project that I developed during my studies.

I made considerable efforts to build a web-based application based on the need to rely on technology in promoting Arabic traditional stories. Therefore, I relied on Hes Bes (old stories) that were created using an Arabic slang language mainly in Syria and Lebanon. To make the content understandable to my target audience, I embarked on editing the language to a Standard Arabic. This resulted in translation challenges to convert the stories into comics. To achieve my objective, I engaged a colleague (Sahel Alsabouni) to support building imagination of the story and create the relevant context.

After a successful integration of the stated aspects, I embarked on creating the narration and recording voiceover. It is after this that I linked the various components with the comic sequence using Godot game Engine software and post the link on websites for public access.

The content in the web site application mainly focused on old folklore stories with a particular lesson. One of the stories involves a man who wanted to raise children. He went to a forest monster and asked for traditional medicine that would help him get children. The forest monster gave him three pieces of traditional medicine, which enabled him to give birth to three children. Unfortunately, one of the children turned out to be smaller in size than his brothers because he had eaten part of the medicine. Ultimately, when the children grew up, the small-sized child saved his brothers. Finally, the small child is hailed as a hero of the family.

This thesis aims to provide insights to enable me to improve the development of the application (detailed below). The study intends to advance the ideas in developing the application in ways that will resonate with children such as sound and make it available on personal computers and mobile phones to improve access.

My practical project is a website application that is created in the "Godot games engine", which comprises images and sound. A screenshot for the first comic sequences will show in the image as below:
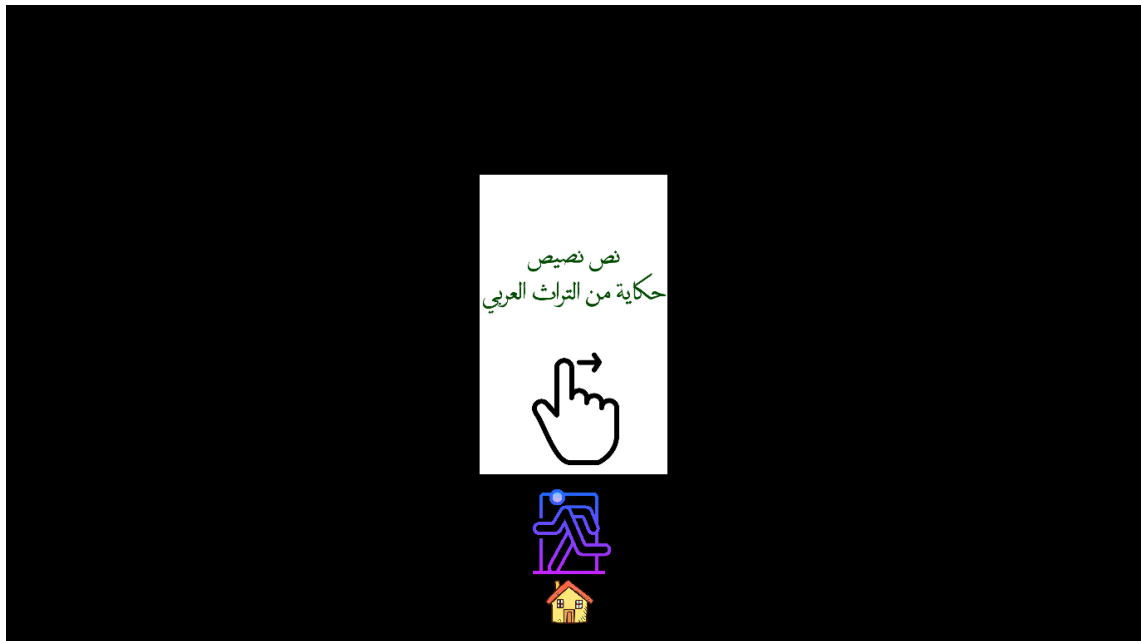

PICTURE 1. Screen capture of an introduction to the interactive comics
(abjdhoz.com 2020)

As apparent in the above image, the complete download comes with four major features to allow for interaction between the user and the interface. First, the text will appear in Arabic language featuring a popular story. The text space allows the user to search for a preferred folk story from the Arab heritage. The second feature is a picture of a home tab which allows the user to return to the home page and make a different choice. Thirdly, the arrow with a picture of a human finger indicates the direction of dragging the figure. Finally, the exit button which is depicted in an escape icon is placed above the home tab button. These features do not only make interactive comics interesting but also engage users based on their preferences. Additionally, the presentation of the control aspects in different colours and improves the visualization of the project on Godot games thus accessible to users who cannot read. They only need to rely on the visual language expressed by images to interact with the story and access the content.

Based on the user's choice, a comic drawing will appear with the main character and reality background. In each case, a heritage environment is depicted through

the use of imaginations and locations. Additionally, the comic story is accompanied by background music, which appeals to the sense of hearing. A sample of the page is presented in the figure below:
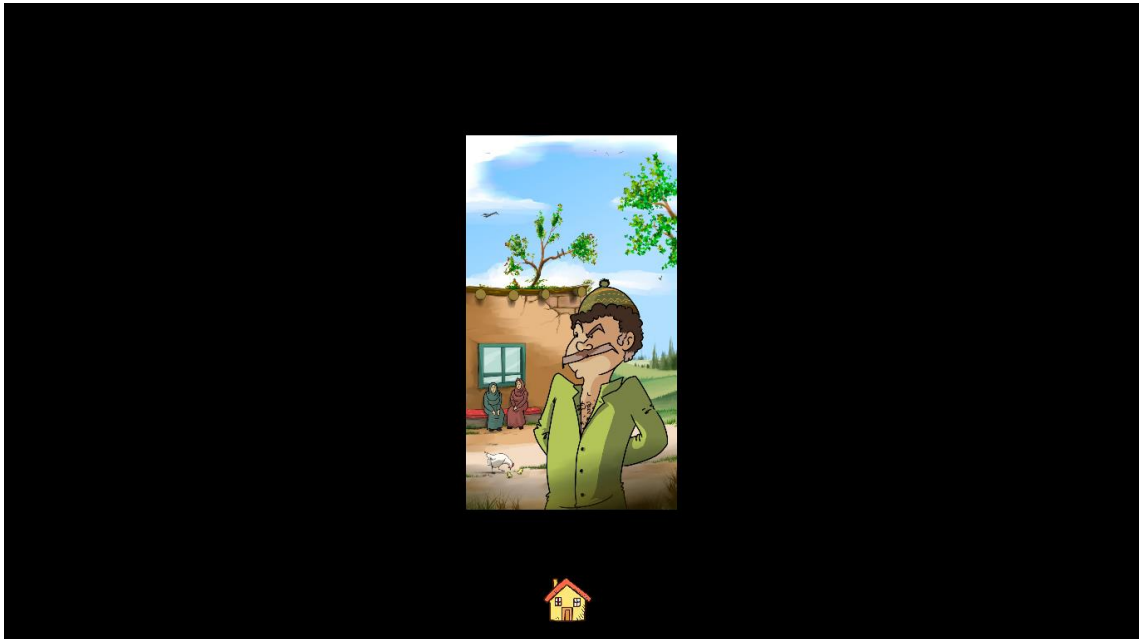
PICTURE 2. Screen capture of drawing on the interactive comics
(abjdhoz.com 2020)

It is after a sequence of six photos that the page displays a baby who wants to sleep to indicate the end.
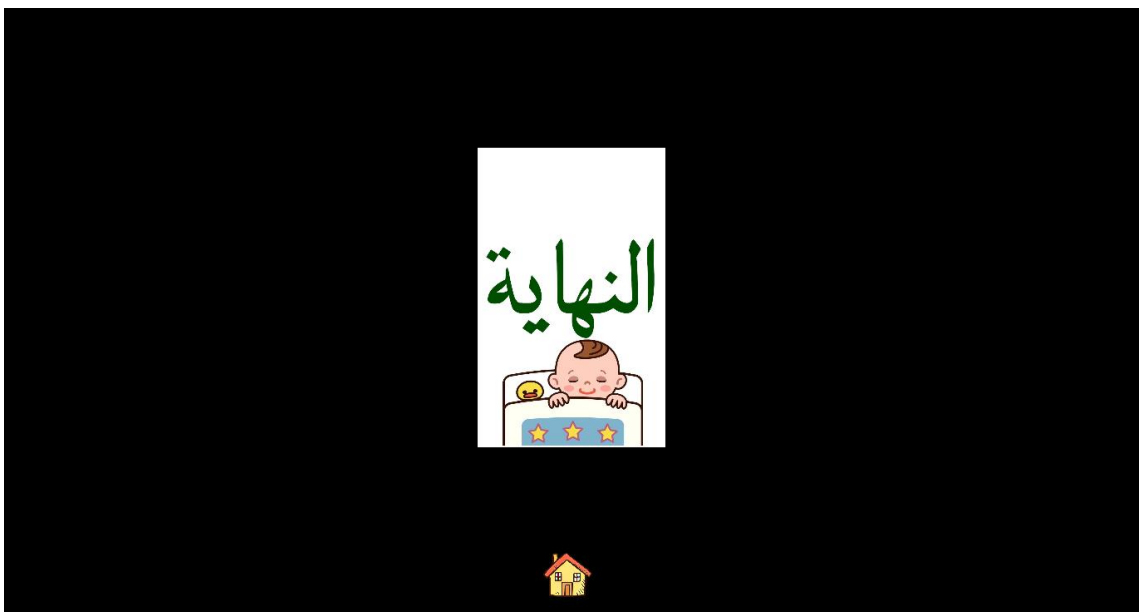
PICTURE 3. Screen capture of a final the interactive comics
(abjdhoz.com 2020)

The end is then written in Arabic in the last window.

While the reviewed literature reveals the use of interactive comics in education and entertainment, this project is indicative of its potential to use in passing culture to the new generation. This is an area that has received very limited attention among scholars. It is on these grounds that this study sought to explore the use of interactive comics for folklore stories in passing culture to the new generation in the context of Arab immigrants in Europe. The outcomes of this study will inform the development of the project to improve website application features in passing culture and uptake by users.

3 METHODOLOGY

This section seeks to outline the various aspects of research methodology including research method, research design, target population and sampling, data collection, and ethics that guided the conduct of the study.

3.1 Research method

This study relied on a qualitative research method to develop a deeper understanding of the use of interactive comics folklore stories as channels through, which parents pass culture to the new generation. According to Rahman (2017), qualitative research incorporates multiple realities, which are informed by lived experiences, behaviour, and other approaches through, which people make sense of the world. The use of a qualitative method was guided by the need to access comprehensive data by remaining flexible in exploring the perception of Arab community regarding the use of folklore stories in passing culture to the new generation. In as much as the other alternatives were considered, the quantitative method was rejected since the study was not intended to confirm or disconfirm the hypothesis. On the other hand, the mixed approach method was not aligned with the need to collect and analyse text data, which was collected from respondents in this study. Therefore, the qualitative method was used to provide an in-depth insight into the experience of the Arab community members that were interviewed to increase understanding of the research phenomenon.

3.2 Research design

Brooks and Normore (2015, 800) pointed out the need to choose appropriate research design to underpin a qualitative study as a vital process that maintains the fidelity of research. The present study used phenomenology as an appropriate design to gather the data on the lived experience of the parents and their efforts to pass culture to the new generation. Pietkiewics and Smith (2014) argued that qualitative design focuses on the perception of people regarding objects and events. In this study, a qualitative design was the ideal research approach given the need to explore the perception of parents in greater detail and develop an in-depth decision during the interviews. The interviews provided an

opportunity for the researcher to gather complex insights into how the parents use folklore stories to pass culture to the new generation especially among the Arab community living in Europe. In this thesis, I have highlighted the perceptions of parents who come from the Arab community. The Levant stories inspire children to embrace moral values, pursue right choices, and support the community and family values.

3.3   Target population and sampling

Adams and Cox (2008) argued that research entails two main populations that are the study population and the theoretical population. While the study population refers to the individuals that the researcher obtains information from, the theoretical population refers to the people to who the researcher intends to generalize information. In the present study, the study population is the selected Arab community members that participated in the interviews while the theoretical population may be the entire Arab community that will gain from the study outcomes. To determine the study population, I approached twelve individuals to participate in the study based on predetermined sampling criteria. It implies that the selection of the participants from the target population involved the use of purposeful sampling.

Lopez and Whitehead (2013) argued that purposive sampling is important when the researcher intends to rely on information-rich cases, especially in-depth analysis. The purpose sampling was guided by the criteria including location, community, and parenthood. For instance, the participants were members of the Arab community living in Europe. They also had children aged 12 years or below at the time of the interview. As a result, a total of 7 respondents were interviewed to provide a rich insight into the use of folklore stories to transfer culture to the new generations among the Arab community living in Europe.

3.4   Data collection

The data collection involved the use of semi-structured interviews involving nine questions to obtain primary data from the study participants. I used the Arabic language in data collection to gather in-depth information since the respondents

were more familiar with the language hence providing an opportunity to build a rapport. To access the desired population, I arranged interviews through friends. Since the researcher acts as the instrument in qualitative studies, the communication between me and the study participants was effective. After an initial introduction, we discussed interview schedules with the respondents who agreed to participate in the research.

Given that the study population was distributed across different geographical locations, I opted to use online interviews. Online interviewing is a way to transfer face-to-face interviewing to internet research. In the case of the present study, having an initial interaction with the respondents provided an opportunity to collect rich data that informed the analysis.

Online interviews allow study respondents to freely express their views and confidence since they choose the location and time when they can answer questions without any restrictions. As a result, I collected in-depth information that would not be possible to gather when using other forms of data collection especially face-to-face interviews. Since the online interview involved the use of WhatsApp calls, the interviewees expressed comfort in sharing their stories without any observable restraints.

Additionally, online interviewing enabled me to better focus on the subject using the language that was more convenient for the study participants. As a result, it allowed me to understand the culture behind the views expressed by the study participants. I was aware of my values and opinions that could compromise the objectivity and result in bias during the research process. To limit my bias, I remained reflexive and transparent during the interviews allowing the respondents to express their views without imposing my feelings.

3.5 Sample interview

Firstly, I designed the questions, then chose the exact target group, and contacted them. Further, I conducted a sample interview to gain experience and familiarise myself with the target population. Therefore, such sample interviews

provided an insight into the possible responses to the questions and the general idea of aspects that required clarifications. This was intended to improve the questions as well as the process and learning from the mistakes in a real case scenario to optimize the collection, quality, and quantity of the gathered data. It was after the test that I adjusted the questions, methods, and the overall approach to the research. This method helps to shape the questions and get to know what the users will talk about. "Test interview" makes the authors confident in asking questions.

Interview Questions

1- How did you like the experience of growing up with stories that come from parents?
2- How do your children listen to folk stories?
3- How does your culture transfer your beliefs to your children?
4- How do you use storytelling as a method to pass on the culture/language?
5- How do your children use smartphones that connect to the internet?
6- How does your family like comics?
7- How do you like to use comics with new technology/ smartphones?
8- How do you like to use new technology/ smartphones to pass culture/language?
9- Do you have anything to add?

3.6 Data analysis

Data analysis is important because it is a tool to understand the data that comes from different sources such as books and research articles. Data analysis coordinates different information but in a comprehensive way. Showing different stakeholders' roles and influences is one of its aspects. Govaert (2009) shows that data analysis is making a process to understand the phenomena. It can help with achieving knowledge. Data analysis provided an insight into the views of the respondents to create general knowledge regarding the subject of interactive comics.

The analysis of qualitative data in this study involved the use of content analysis approach. The content analysis gives the thesis a deep understanding of the subject, given the multiple views from the respondents regarding folk stories and new media. Further, the content analysis provides this thesis with a wider perspective. It is an important approach to understand the different views and perceptions regarding the questions to the respondents. Additionally, the analysis method is essential to understand the stakeholders' role, circumstances, and conditions of folklore stories and new media (Mayring 2000). The use of semi-structured questionnaires especially open-ended questions resulted in collecting vast amounts of data that require abstraction and explanation to gain a deeper understanding. The analysis of the transcribed interviews followed steps as outlined below by Alase (2017).

Reading and rereading were vital in understanding the similarities in phrases according to how individuals expressed their views. This was a continuous process, which I undertook especially after organizing the interview responses based on the individual questions. As I engaged with the responses in each question, I was able to identify phrases and areas of potential interests concerning the research issue. The second step involved noting key phrases and themes resulting from the participant responses. To effectively manage the information, I highlighted the key phrases using colours to provide an insight into the existing similarities and differences in the views of the respondents.

The next step involved looking for patterns and similarities in the data regarding the identified areas of concern such as experience with the folklore stories, children's interest in the folklore stories, passing culture, and use of technology or smartphone, and interest in comics within the family set up. As a result, I could establish a pattern across different cases, which informed the emerging themes to address the research issue.

I have provided a detailed description of the findings resulting from the analysis. To enhance the understanding and discussions around the identified themes, I have used direct quotes from the respondents as part of the effort to justify the explanations and analysis.

4   RESEARCH FINDINGS

Out of the 12 participants that were approached for the interview, only seven turned up as per the schedule. For the ease of reading and disclosure issues, the seven interviewees will be referred to as A, B, C, D, E, F, and G. To uphold the security of information obtained from interviewees and avoid any harm resulting from the study, the research upheld anonymity, informed consent, and security as the basic ethical principles in conducting the study. To ensure anonymity, any self-identifiable information was removed from the transcriptions and reporting of the raw data collected from the respondents. Meanwhile, informed consent was achieved through the provision of adequate information to the selected partici-pants before the interviews. This included informing the respondents that the data will only be used for academic purposes and their freedom to withdraw from the study if they felt uncomfortable. In as much as the participants had the autonomy, none of them withdrew from the interviews during the data collecting. Lastly, the respondents were assured of the security of data obtained, which were not to be shared with any third party. The table below provides a summary of the respond-ents' profiles based on the sampling criteria:

Participant	Country	Children	Age Bracket
A	Finland	2	40-50
B	Finland	3	50-60
C	Luxembourg	1	30-40
D	Finland	2	40-50
E	Luxembourg	3	40-50
F	Canada	2	40-50
G	Finland	3	40-50

TABLE 1. Participant, Country, and Age

(The Author 2020)

4.1 Growing up with stories

The respondents expressed their experiences of growing up with stories from parents. However, the parents acknowledged huge differences between the present time and the past especially in terms of the changes in geographical location. The respondents acknowledged the lack of access to the folklore stories due to change in the location of residents. For instance, in Europe / North America, children no longer get the opportunity to listen to stories from their grandparents.

> Grandmother and grandfather were the ones who told us stories. We were a big family, and it was difficult to meet with the father and mother, my father was busy and had no time for the family. So, grandfather and grandmother gathered us and told stories to everyone. And all the stories we know are 90% from grandma, the rest are from the grandpa. From blunt and bloody readings on TV, I did not live with grandpa and grandma. The old inheritance is not very much present. (Interviewee 2020.)

Additionally, the participants reported that parents look at the past as a good memory and good experiences. Parents try hard to share their traditions and values with their children. The grandparents see that as an important approach to passing folk stories to children.

> In ancient times, folklore storytelling was the main approach to transfer culture. Parents and grandmothers had a style acceptable to their children. We as children accept these stories. And we lived in it, and sweet memories. (Interviewee 2020.)

An interesting point made by the interviewee above shows that the Arab parents living in Europe / North America value memories resulting from the folklore stories. Meanwhile, the respondents pointed out the significant variations in their experiences and those of their children who do not have the opportunity to access the folklore stories, which trigger a good memory. Based on the responses from the study participants, the folklore story source can be summarized as under:

> While the parents grew up with access to the folklore stories, the Arab immigrant children lack the opportunity to listen to folklore stories given the limited access to the folklore stories from the parents or grandparents. From blunt and bloody readings on TV, I did not live with grandpa and grandma. The old inheritance is not very much present. (Interviewee 2020.)

Further, the study sought to explore the interests between the current generation and older generation regarding listening to the folklore stories. The interactive folklore and storytelling develop and breaks down many potential social barriers between different generations. It helps families talk with each other and connect, and exchange cultures. The old generation is interested in transferring culture and the new generation is interested in entertainment. However, as one of the respondents reported, children are not interested in the folklore stories compared to the use of new media.

> Our problem with the current generation. Our folk stories are not depicted in a fun way for the child. The story must be visually dazzling, to attract children. Watching my little girl: When you watch Finnish, English content. Production is attractive. Whereas when we watch the Arabic content: it is poor by the dazzling eyesight. And I say that there is a crisis or problem in producing Arabic media content. (Interviewee 2020.)

> Children listen to the stories. [However] this is nonsense from the children's point of view, not a reality. They feel that all are lies due to their geographical location, which influences their thinking. it is possible in Arab countries to respect the cultural principles. But here in Europe, there is a limited possibility. (Interviewee 2020.)

On the contrary, there were mixed views regarding the parents' interest in using the folklores to pass culture to their children. Some of the respondents pointed out that the parents are interested in telling their children folklore stories.

> My children love stories, especially reading stories themselves. They prefer reading from an actual book or magazine rather than an iPad or a digital device. They like to hold/touch the paper. At the same time, they read from digital devices frequently. They love stories more than comics. But the popular folk stories, which I do not remember well. When I tell them a story, they cling to it. And they always ask me to tell them old stories. Unfortunately, I do not save much. The problem is that our children are far away from our stories and our old folklore. (Interviewee 2020.)

> Children enjoy folktales. They enjoy more than the book. And old stories because they are funny, funny, exotic. While the current stories from reality have nothing special. And they love old adventures. (Interviewee 2020.)

Conversely, some of the respondents argued that folklore stories involve sadness and pain, which are not appropriate for their children. Others also considered the folklore stories to be lies, which make it difficult for the parents to tell their kids.

> Popular stories that I know about my mother revolve around fiction or sometimes there is some pain and sadness. Such stories I would not like to tell my children. To replace that I use a new comic book for a two-year-old full of love and joy. (Interviewee 2020.)

The responses reveal antagonism between the folklore stories from the books and the new media to attract the new generation of children.

4.2 Passing of culture and beliefs

The research participants acknowledged the need for time with children to transfer culture through folklore stories. Unlike the earliest times when family gatherings provided an opportunity for storytelling, the parents in the current times lack quality times with their kids. "When I sit down with them. By imitation of life. There is no need to talk and tell stories with children" (Interviewee 2020).

Another respondent argued that Arabic schools in Finland have assumed the role of passing culture.

> You must tell the children, but this [telling the children] is not enough. Arab schools in Finland [have] contact with the people in the Arab countries, and I think it has been a good experience through the "Corona crisis", which necessitated families to remain together at home. So [the] communication with the people in the Arab region has increased. Also, visual communication with the family [members] in the private area has increased. (Interviewee 2020.)

Based on the views of the respondents, there are efforts by the interviewed Arab Immigrant families in Europe or North America to pass culture and beliefs to the younger generation despite limited interest among children. The process of culture transfer involves parents and schools while stories dominate as a key medium through, which parents communicate culture to children. The approaches to pass culture can be depicted by the figure below:
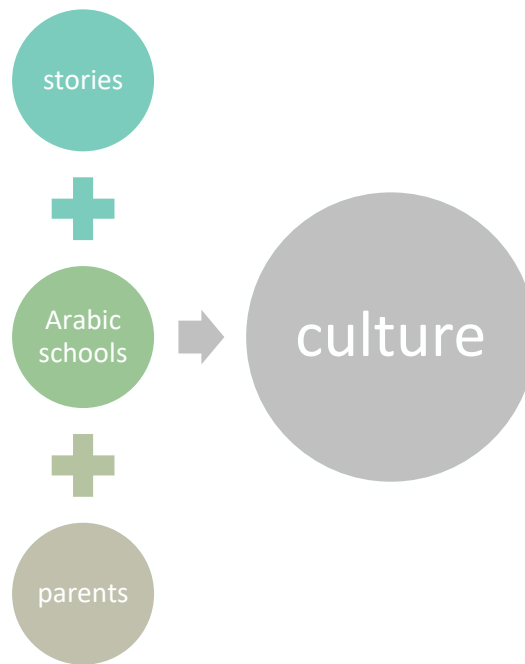
FIGURE 3. How to pass culture among Arabic community
(The Author 2020)

Respondents further argued that storytelling is used as a medium to pass culture despite limited interest among the children. This depends on the parents' interest to pass the culture while children listen to these stories. Meanwhile, children are affected by their peers and learning institutions. Children are attracted to the culture of the host country which their parents consider to be stubbornness especially when they challenge their parents.

However, to develop interest among children, the respondents acknowledged their use of different approaches including movies, social media such as YouTube, and pictures to attract the attention of their children. Some children are not interested in stories. There is a need to support the stories through media, pictures, and movies to make them more attractive. The parents need to use simple logic and language that the children use. The children do not accept violence in folk stories. The parents look to the stories as important tools to pass culture and beliefs. The parents use non-Arabic stories to transfer their culture and beliefs. It needs a strong focus and concentration from the parents to pass their culture.

Meanwhile, the study participants reported various challenges associated with their children's interests including the influence of the host country and violence in folklore stories.

> This depends on the parents, to transfer the culture. But children hear these stories. Because children are currently affected by their friends and schools. Children are imbued with the culture of the present country. Children say that we should be stubborn. And the parents are not right. (Interviewee 2020.)

The respondents also reported that using YouTube as a means to convey Arab culture.

> Through YouTube videos as well as Drawn and cardboard, children can watch the content and relate to their culture. This is similar to the case of a cartoon, which easily relates to the interest of children. To achieve this, there is a need for experts to develop the apps using Standard Arabic language to improve the experience of the users. This way, you can grow a child in classical Arabic. (Interviewee 2020.)

4.3   Use of smartphones and the internet in passing culture

When it comes to talking about the usability of mobile phones, the majority of the interviewees became tense and expressed anxiety, fear of the future, and a clash of cultures.

> Cynical joke. They use the Internet in an addictive way. And the Internet ruins the mind and culture. Children have no interest in studying. And when I say to the children, neither they hear the father nor the mother. As far as he hears the teacher. I work extensively with the school to reduce children's use of the Internet. But I can't find a good response from the school. And they do not deal seriously with this matter. They ask parents to take the phone off the children. This is a very difficult solution. I think the internet was wrong, and the kids should be retaught on paper. (Interviewee 2020.)

Another respondent pointed out the effects of new media as below:

> I do not think so. Modern technology will completely ruin our culture. We highly regarded culture, but now the next generation is hard to

take in the same way. Weak people are unable to transfer culture through technology. (Interviewee 2020.)

The tone of voice of many interviewees changed while asking about mobile phones, it includes a lack of control, fear of being lost, because of the new generation's use of smartphones. The majority of the parents have the feeling of having low to zero control when it comes to their children using mobile phones and tablet devices. They feel as if they cannot pass their cultures anymore, because unlike in the past, the parents are not the sources of culture, but rather are the smartphones and tablet devices. In many cases, interviewed parents reported a lack of control over their children's behaviour. The flow of new information and new culture become flow from the new generation to the old generation by using mobile phone media content. The overuse of the mobile phone is one of the common things reported by the interviewees. The mobile phone is a threat to culture from the perspective of the interviewed Arabic parents.

> I suffer from this thing [children addiction to mobile phones] because the children [use mobile phones] a lot. Often, the parents are unable to prevent or persuade them to stay away from the devices connected to the Internet. They love movies very much. I know that my children read books a lot, but they don't like reading books when using devices connected to the Internet. Because of the easy access to electronic films. (Interviewee 2020.)

The respondents pointed out that children use smartphones for various purposes including talking, learning with friends, and family members. The respondents further reported the existing conflict due to the use of mobile phones, which takes the children away from parents hence compromising the role of parents in transferring culture to them. One of the respondents argued that the children excessively use mobile devices:

> They use it a lot. (no limits). Inspiring kids. And the kids bring us a new culture, for example, I got to know the term YouTube from my son. There is a cultural world for children because of the Internet. (Interviewee 2020.)

Further, the respondents acknowledged the need for children to turn to books and use of papers instead of overreliance on mobile apps. Meanwhile, they do

not know how to address the situation. One of the interviewed parents narrated his efforts to make his children attracted to books as under:

> All I do is go to Jordan, I buy books and stories for children. As a result, children are increasingly attracted to books especially when the stories are arranged and directed attractively. (Interviewee 2020.)

Reading texts may be a difficult task for a small child. It is good, but not all children can read. However, all children can hear and watch. As highlighted by the interviewed parents, the content presented to the child should be supported by someone who can read to support the child.

This is not the case with visual stories, which a child can watch as reported by one of the parents below:

> I bring a lot of stories to build and the [child] also brings some stories for himself, which he watches and reads. [However] the Internet is faster and stronger. [This is why] this generation does not currently accept these things [Folklore stories told by parents]. (Interviewee 2020.)

A summary of the views expressed by the respondents are highlighted in the table below:

Use without limitation	Suffer from the overuse	Professional in using mobile
Takes the children away from books	Ruins the culture of the children	Take the children away from studying
Go away from their parents	Take children's attention	

FIGURE 4. Feedback from partners regarding children usability of smartphones (The Author 2020)

4.4 Use of comics in the family

The difference between the Arabic culture and the European / American is quite significant regarding the comic. European cultures tend to use comics on a more regular basis in comparison to the Arabic community. Europeans tend to read/watch comics, in their free time they get while doing other activities, namely travelling. Whereas in the Arabic culture, comics are not regularly used as a separate activity, and not for educational purposes, rather less often in comparison (perhaps once a month) and for entertainment purposes, mainly for children. Based on the interviews, the families reported the use of comic stories in many ways including eliminating children's focus on mobile phones.

> My child loves comics. And related stories. There can be parts of the characters or decorations moving. Which increases the pleasure of reading. So far, we have not improved the stories attractively. The attraction is important to children. And not all comics on the Internet are attractive. Recently, I noticed children attracted to comics especially my 6-year-old son. In certain stories related to the Arabic language, he does not tire of repeating the story again and again. And the boys spoke Arabic classics. They do not speak the colloquially with whom we speak. They are influenced by Standard Arabic, which comes from children's cartoon films. (Interviewee 2020.)

Some children become attracted to comics in Arabic when they find one. This activity became part of the culture of the family, and the family saw that as a safe way against mobile phones. The interviewed Arabic parents trust comic books more than mobile phones. It helps them interact with the children and know what they do. They like to show them the original culture using the colour, picture, comic, and illustrations to the new generation using comic books.

As reported by the respondents, comics are rich in colour, text, drama, and stories. The children use comics to learn how to read since it enables them to interact with the world of reading. The interviewees reported that some parents do not use comics to transfer culture. Meanwhile, most Arabic families rely on the use of comics from Arabic countries to teach their children language and other cultural aspects.

> Children love movies or applications. Even the child was young, he could react. In language, for example, knowing that the application is simple I teach Arabic, and my daughter learned a lot of Arabic letters. Technology helps to memorize the language. It can stimulate a culture of interaction with cartoon characters. It can open a wide space for children. It helps children. (Interviewee 2020.)

On the contrary, the interviewees pointed out that comics are becoming less attractive to children who prefer movies and media platforms.

Certainly, technology is an important tool in making folklore stories and content of the interactive comics attractive to children. But Arab experiences are very poor in this field. It implies that there need for an attractive method of transmitting culture to Arab children in the expatriate country.

PICTURE 4. An interviewee's children home library

(Interviewee 2020)

4.5   Use of comics in technology / smartphones

The study also explored the use of comics with the new technology especially smartphones. Some of the interviewees do not get the idea of interactivity. However, during the interview with the parents from the Arabic community, they realized what the topic is about. The education factors play a key role in knowing the new technology. People are more willing to get information and give it to their family and friends. Using new technology is important for the family to become

more modern and give good things to their children in the future. The parents like to learn more about new technology and give money and time to get this technology and use it for children. The respondents acknowledge the importance of comics in smartphones as attractive to children. "There is a need to improve comics to be more beneficial to the children especially in transferring culture" (Interviewee 2020).

The parents prefer interactive comics to be combined with the new media. The reading and imagination must be part of the comic in New media since interactivity is important for children. As one of the respondents pointed out:

> So far, we have not improved the stories attractively. The attraction is important to children. And not all comics on the Internet are attractive. That is, the two should be combined. I demand the influencers implement this technology. (Interviewee 2020.)

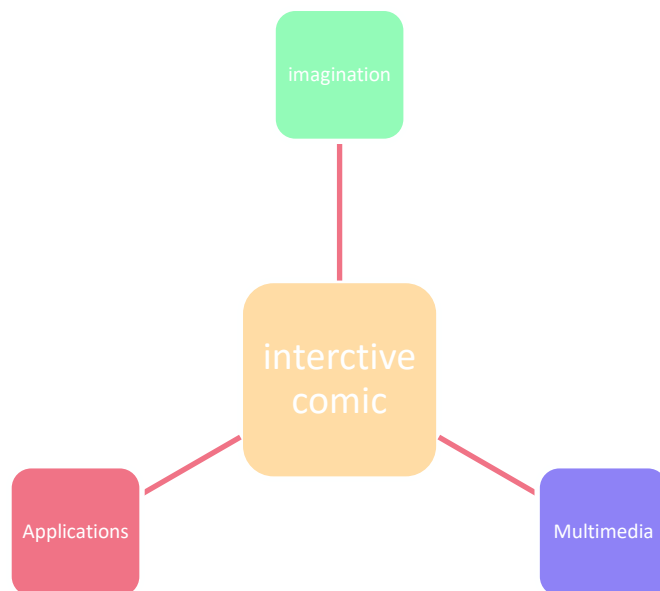The figure below provides an overview of the component of interactive from the parent's point of view:

FIGURE 5. The component of interactive media from a parent's point of view. (The Author 2020)

4.6   Use of new technology/smartphones to pass culture

The study also explored the use of smartphones to pass culture to the children. The interviewees expressed interest in the new media. However, there are two different opinions on the use of new technology. Some people see it as a threat to their own culture and beliefs, others think it is important to use the media tools to pass the cultures and beliefs.

> I do not think so. Modern technology will completely ruin our culture. We especially took a culture, but now the next generation is hard to take in the same way. Weak people are unable to transfer culture through technology. I like to benefit from technology by preserving our beautiful customs and beliefs. Either through inter-active stories or chants of easy melody. Or through applications that allow the child to gain our habits. And our traditions enjoyably and beautifully. (Interviewee 2020.)

The respondents think the Arabic content is poor, they like to have more advanced media tools for people to use it to pass cultures. During the interview, some parents reported that children become more attracted to the new media as educational tools. Parents learn more from children when they have new content.

> Certainly, technology must be used. But Arab experiences are very poor in this field. I did not see attractive Arabic content for children. There must be an attractive method of transmitting culture to children. (Interviewee 2020.)

The above quotes revealed the need to improve the Arab content to be interesting to children and also to improve the passing of culture to the new generation. Additionally, most of the respondents reported that parents are interested in using the new media to pass culture to their children. Meanwhile, they pointed out the need for their involvement in assisting the children and also to improve the quality of the graphics to be more attractive to children.

> Parents in the introduction should review and evaluate the content provided to the child, from a book, video, or song. And then present it to the child because technology is a big sea, and we must choose what suits our educational goals. So far, we have not improved the stories attractively. The attraction is important to children. And not all comics on the Internet are attractive. (Interviewee 2020.)

When I ask the interviewees if they have anything to add, some of them expressed their views while others did not know what to say. This question provided a space for the interviewees to express themselves, talking freely and talking about some vision, or futuristic views they have. Their main worry was about the future of culture among the children. With the use of new media and interactivity, there are consistent changes in the approaches to cultural transference, which form part of the ongoing change. The circumstances the children are growing up in are different than the parent's, especially with regards to technology, and new media. Some parents have this nostalgia about the past, they do not like to see the trend into the future. Others look at the new media as educational tools. The parents expect to use the benefits of new media in passing their own cultures.

> There are limitless ideas in my imagination. We must understand the children's current concerns, and there are my son's 16 experiences, there is cultural suffering for the child daily. The child asked me every week to be in cultural contact with norms and religion. We can create new stories. Like grandmother stories, in our generation, we can use stories from second societies such as European or Asian. Maybe, we compose stories that are more relevant to the children rather than those that create a sense of violence. But it starts with something that exists to build on it. (Interviewee 2020.)

There is a need for technological initiatives to support media content, and media content for children must be created. Based on the views of the parents, the recommendations to pass culture is summarised in the figure below.
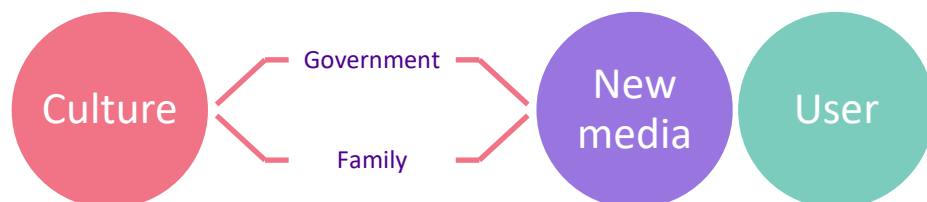

FIGURE 6. The need to pass culture from the viewpoint of the interviewee (The Author 2020)

5 DISCUSSION

This section seeks to explain the research findings and results. These are viewed in light of the extant literature, which is largely consistent with the study outcomes. In as much as the study has resulted in invaluable insights, the discussion specifically refers to the experiences of the interviewed parents owing to the small sample size that was used in this study.

The study has revealed that interactive comics for folklore stories is an important approach in passing culture to the new generation. The outcomes showed that unlike the use of books, the penetration of digital comics has increased given the multiple platforms for dissemination. Consistent with the study conducted by Saputri (2017), the analysis of the responses from interviewed parents reported that the use of media comics has a noticeable influence on the culture, especially on the socialization processes. It implies that through the language or visual impacts in interactive comics the children learn aspects of language, which acts as a medium of passing culture based on the user experience.

In essence, participants pointed out that the interactive comics act as platforms to pass morals and beliefs, which are integrated into the storyline. The folklore stories aim to communicate a specific virtue to the user. Children who interact with the media through smartphones, tablets, and personal computers also learn certain cultural aspects including language, morals, and beliefs. Meanwhile, the analysis of the interview has revealed the need for integration of old stories within the surrounding of the users to improve their experience.

The analysis of the responses also revealed that interviewed parents use new technology and new media folklore stories to expose their children to the culture of their homeland. The parents want to openly discuss the newly achieved culture, which is a mixture of the two cultures, their original culture from their homeland, and the culture of the new land they live in. Further, the outcome of the study pointed out that technology can be used to achieve the goal of passing culture. The research results indicate that children are more attracted to the pic-

ture rather than text. Based on the analysis of the interviews, the interactive comics enhance how children experience the culture and explore their host country's beliefs.

Consistent with the research conducted by Furuhata-Turner (2013), interactive comics play a significant role in the understanding of texts, as well as, the intended culture. Similarly, Zaibon (2019) revealed that digital comics act as platforms to communicate social injustices, which aim at teaching values and norms to the children. The results further pointed out that cultural aspects such as language and the storyline are communicated interestingly to ensure increased engagement among the users. Therefore, the interviewed parents reported that they play an important role in ensuring that their children get access to interactive comics as a way of passing culture.

In as much as interactive comics are attractive to children, the [children] generation lack access to the traditional approaches to folklore storytelling. However, consistent with extant studies, the new generation has a considerable pool of folklore stories from, which they can make choices (Andrews, Baber, Efremov & Komarov 2012, 1705). This provides an opportunity to influence various cultural outcomes, which are necessary to ensure a continuous learning process among children through interactive comics. On the other hand, the study revealed that the existing applications have questionable quality in terms of content integration and designs. This leaves an important gap for improving the application development to meet the role of passing culture especially among the Arab children living in Europe or North America.

The views expressed by the research participants pointed to three aspects that define parents' commitment to passing culture to their children. Based on the responses, some participants demonstrated an openness to new ideas while seeking to maintain their culture. On the other hand, some participants demonstrated difficulties in adopting the new culture and passing it to their children. Their views demonstrated a willingness to impart their cultural values to the children through folklore stories. Lastly, other participants were not willing to share their experiences in regards to how they pass their culture and experiences with

their children. Figure 6 below depicts the category of participants based on their role in passing culture.
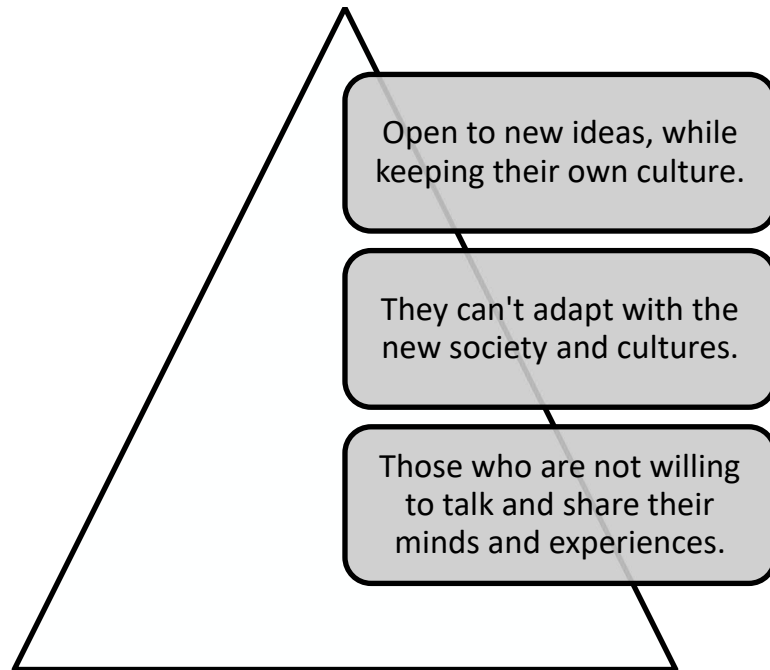

FIGURE 6. Categories of Participants interviewed
(The Author 2020)

Given the study outcomes, there is a need to create new stories that combine the old folklore stories and new surroundings. Further, the participants expressed the need for improved quality of the interactive comics in new media to make them more attractive to the users

6   CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

6.1   Conclusion

The present study aimed to explore how parents pass culture to a new generation through the use of interactive comics for folklore stories. The achievement of this aim is apparent in the analysis and discussions, which has revealed an increase in the use of digital comics in engaging the Arab children among the selected countries in Europe / North America. The interactive comics is not only interesting to children as an approach to communicate cultural values but also provides multiple options where users can select stories. This research also raised concerns about the quality of content and attractiveness to children in the development and design of the Arab interactive comics, which compromise the experience of the users and limit the impacts in disseminating the intended cultural values. Therefore, because of the emerging digital media projects, the study has revealed the need to improve the design to ensure a richer experience among the users.

As part of the efforts to build the application into the future, there is a need for platforms that can be used in mobile phones. This will improve access to children in Arab community. Additionally, the platform will provide an opportunity for children in Europe and North America to familiarise themselves with Arabic calligraphy, as well as, to read, and write the standard Arabic language. Finally, the project will give more room for family or children to generate content that they can exchange on social media which will make the folklore stories more popular.

6.2   Limitations

While the study revealed valuable insights into the use of interactive comics in passing culture to the new generation, there are limitations associated with the research process. Given that this was a qualitative study, the sample used was small, which compromises the generalization of the study outcomes. Additionally, the interviews were conducted in Arabic and later translated into the English language. This implied loss of the original meanings in some instances, which could compromise the interpretation and analysis. Meanwhile, the researcher's

understanding of both languages played an important role in ensuring the meanings are consistent. The study was also limited owing to the sensitivity of the cultural issues that resulted in a lack of willingness among the respondents to provide detailed information in answering the interview questions. This was further worsened by the restrictions to the meeting due to the COVID-19 pandemic at the time of conducting the interview.

According to the results obtained from this thesis, the participants demonstrated an interest in finding the old folklore stories in the new media. Meanwhile, the existing applications fail to capture the heritage of Arabic countries in the new applications. This reveals an opportunity to integrate Arabic stories from old books in building new applications and make them accessible to the Arabic community.

6.3   Future research

Based on the study outcomes, various areas require further enquiries. Future research can explore the same topic by focusing on a wider scope. This will provide increased insight into the role that interactive comics play in advancing the Arab immigrant community culture. Additionally, the design and creation of the interactive comics give an impression of a mixed culture for the host country and that of the homeland. Therefore, future studies should explore the effects of the host country's culture in the new generation's identity in view of access to interactive comics. Finally, the research has revealed an increased role of technology in passing culture to the new generation. Meanwhile, this is a new area that has not been widely explored to inform how the changes can strengthen the cultural uptake among the new generation. Therefore, more studies are needed on heritage to explore how technological devices are used as a tool to pass culture to the new generation.

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