

## ABSTRACT

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# The Digital Fireplace

Wherever I stand or go – a restaurant, the cinema or even a public toilet – there are people holding a device in which they can do almost anything they can do at home via the Internet. This device, which we call a smartphone, has become an obsession for many people. With this device we are in continuous connection to the Internet and our social media. Social media gives the option to look at thousands of images per day. These are pictures of your neighbor with her dog, a selfie of your best friend, a newborn baby or somewhat gruesome images from the war in Syria. Where it used to take place in public places and on our TV only, you carry it with you any time of the day in your pocket. We wake up with it, take it to work, and proceed to go to bed with it.

We keep staring at our digital fire. We often keep looking at the same images and visit it one or more times a day. What is so exciting about the fire? How is it that we continue to look at the fire? I'm curious about the world of social media, and manipulation through images. My research question is:

**To what extent are we being manipulated by image on social media?**

*"We live in a world of the mass producing and consuming of images which shape our lives and the public mind"<sup>1</sup> - Bill Moyers*

Our brains are mainly focused on the visual perception. Our visual senses are stimulated by social media and that's why we go back often. Watching short information or images continuously, we create dopamine in your body, causing that image can be addictive. We keep on wanting more, image after image. By continuously looking at visual images and to get short amounts of texts our brain has evolved into a *popcorn brain*. And it is not just a mental addiction; the overuse of your smartphone can lead to phantom vibrations in your body. We can conclude that our smartphone and the use of social media is addictive.

Our behavior on the Internet is continuously monitored by social media and because of this they know what we like to see, and can advertise these images, so we will most likely click on them. Social media tests us by doing so. The images they show match with our feelings and our interests. We all live in separate social media bubbles that only strengthen themselves.

Science Fiction and recent technologies gives us an image of what might happen in the future. But even if we do make a prediction, there is always a factor that is still undetermined: people. There will occasionally be protested by users, but over time it seems to smooth out. Will we at one point say: Enough is enough?

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<sup>1</sup> Bill Moyers (1990) *Consuming Images* [video]. source: <https://www.youtube.com/>