Using Social Media for Social Change:

A Case Study of a Digitally-based Awareness Campaign about the Israeli Prostitution Industry *When He Pays/Me*

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Abstract
The rise of social media platforms have not only allowed new opportunities for more citizen-driven initiatives, but also social change promotion in a potentially more participatory-oriented way that offers engagement with the general public and the people the change is aimed at. This has led to an increased scholarly interest in the role of these technologies in strategically promoted social change activist initiatives. However, while the focus has been lying on their use by local groups and social movements for mobilisation, there has been little focus on their use for awareness raising and through participatory communication. Therefore, through a case study of an on-going, digitally-based When He Pays/Me campaign that raises awareness about the Israeli prostitution industry as part of a human rights context by an activist, this thesis investigates the potential role of social media platforms to enable participation, specifically Facebook, in Israeli human rights awareness campaigns. The data used to investigate this included one semi-structured, in-depth interview with the activist and 22 online media texts about the campaign. The analysis revealed that there has been an innovative use of tactics in the campaign through the extensive use of PC’s principles that are based on two-way (dialogic) communication in the form of free, open, transparent, inclusive dialogues with various groups of people, creativity, flexibility, learning, reflexivity, and critical thinking. Dialogues take place on Facebook’s various spaces, and additional communication mediums and channels are used. Moreover, a new kind of story-telling that reveals the complexities and nuances of the industry was used. It was then concluded that the potential of social media platforms, namely Facebook, as a tool to enable participation in Israeli awareness-raising human rights campaigns is the combination of the platform’s popularity and its unique combination of affordances in the form of cause-Pages provided to social campaigns that include a space for dialogue, complex messaging, and anonymity. However, to fulfil this potential, the use of PC’s principles must be applied.

Key words: social media, new media, Facebook, digital activism, awareness campaigns, participatory communication, human rights, prostitution, Israel
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1 Introduction

When he pays: "... so I turn her into a missionary, she glances at me to the right, lies down on her back, closes her eyes ... you know, you feel like you're raping her ... you feel that this girl hates... despises her work. And every two minutes she wants to change position ... it's like, you feel she is on needles. I said to myself, 'cool', turned her over, and said 'come on, doggy time.' "

When he pays me: "... It hurts. You want to scream but you can’t. He tells you to shut up because he’s paying: 'come on, you’re enjoying this'."

Popular myths about prostitution are deeply embedded in culture. Prostitution is often thought of as the most ancient “profession”, and since it has always been around, it will forever stay. The way prostituted women are perceived differs, ranging from the extremes of the “happy whore” to the eternally abused drug addict. Consequently, many people see no way around this eternal phenomenon. However, while “progressive” campaigns highlight the proud sex-workers’ rights and profession, others perceive this phenomenon as a lasting form of slavery that should be abolished. The latter is the case of the When He Pays/Me (WHP/M) campaign, which is an on-going, digitally-based campaign, primarily on Facebook, that raises awareness about the Israeli prostitution industry as part of a human rights context, and from which the quote of a prostitution consumer and the testimony of a prostituted woman above were taken. The campaign was initiated and has been conducted by a solo-activist who believes that the brutal truth about the prostitution industry needs to be known to the general public and through the eyes of the people who constitute it—the prostitutes and the johns. Her aim is to raise awareness to the harms prostitution entails to the women engaged in it by the men who consume (pay for) it by promoting a public debate. This is in contrast to other Israeli actors’ efforts to raise awareness about prostitution that are more linear and “traditional”, such as lectures, seminars, and workshops held by practitioners to specific sections of the population (i.e. youth, police officers, policy makers, etc.) (Franco Gal’or, 2012, pp. 70-78) or use social media platforms in relatively short-term interventions that engage the public in limited ways.

The development of the internet, especially the embedment of social media, in our daily “information-saturated society” lives (Castells, 2011), has not only brought a proliferation in

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1 The phrases women in prostitution, women engaged in prostitution, and prostituted women will be used interchangeably in the thesis since all three denote a lack of free choice.

2 The terms prostitution industry and prostitution world refer to the same phenomenon and will, therefore, be, used interchangeably.

3 Since the campaign, quotes, and testimonies are all in Hebrew, all their translations are my own.
the use of these technologies for more strategic citizen-driven initiatives for social change (Waisbord, 2014), but also their promotion in a potentially more participatory-oriented way that offers engagement with the general public and the people the change is aimed at (Tufte, 2017). This potential role is also one of the key challenges in Communication for Development (ComDev) and Social Change field (CDSC) in which this thesis is situated. Consequently, the use of these technologies by activists have led to an increased scholarly interest in these technologies’ role in deliberative efforts to contest social injustices and promote social change (Waisbord, 2014). There has been a focus on their use by local groups (Harris & Flouch, 2011; Hothi, 2012) and particularly by trans/national SMs to collaborate (Ayres, 1999), coordinate actions horizontally (Castells, 2015), share information about their cause (Castells, 2011; Tufekci, 2013), and most prominently, mobilise for protest (Castells, 2015; Gerbaudo, 2012). However, there has been very little research on their use for awareness raising and through participation, despite Hemer and Tufte’s (2012) suggestion to research these initiatives that are “full of media uses and communicative practices, but emerging from a citizens’ profound and often - desperate reaction to this global Now.” (pp. 234-235). Additionally, to my knowledge, there has been no published research on Israeli human rights awareness campaigns, nor on prostitution-based ones, digitally- or non-digitally-based. Thereby, exploring the use of these technologies by an activist who contest social injustice of a marginalised group—prostituted women⁴—will contribute to their suggestion and widen the focus of research to activism that focuses on awareness raising through participation.

Therefore, the focus of this thesis is on the role of social media platforms, namely Facebook, as a tool to enable participation in Israeli human rights awareness campaigns. This will be explored through the case study of the WHP/M campaign mentioned above through the lens of participatory communication (PC) based on Freire (1970) that stresses dialogic communication and, thus, active participation of the people involved in the efforts. This case was chosen because it makes use of creative ways to raise awareness about a human rights issue by utilising Facebook through participation. The main research question and sub-question that guide this thesis are then the following:

1. What is the potential of social media platforms, primarily Facebook, as a tool to enable participation in the When He Pays/Me campaign?

⁴ Prostituted women constitute a marginalised, voiceless group in many societies: they are stigmatised because of myths, socially disgraced (Almog, 2008), absent from the discourse about them and, therefore, “Othered”, which involves also disempowerment and silencing—they are socially outcasted, “abandoned” (Gur, 2008, p. 19).
1.1 In how far are the principles of participatory communication reflected in the campaigns’ tactics?

To answer the research questions, one semi-structured, in-depth interview with the activist who conducts the campaign in addition to 22 online media texts about the campaign were used as data for both the analysis and context for the case presentation.

To answer the thesis’ research questions, I will address the following sections: First, I provide a background about the current debates about activism in the social media age, followed by the media and communication practices in Israel and its demographics. Then I introduce the major perspectives in prostitution, its connection to sex-trafficking, and the situation of both phenomena in Israel. The case study is then presented, followed by a literature review about transnational prostitution and sex-work activist awareness efforts. I then provide PC’s theoretical framework and a methodology section that includes the philosophical view taken in this paper and reflexivity, data collection and analysis process, and ethical considerations. The study’s results are then presented and analysed in relation to the theoretical framework. In the concluding section, I provide a summary of the main findings, followed by the study’s contributions and limitations, and some suggestions for future research.

2 Background

In this section, the contemporary debates about digital activism are introduced, followed by a short introduction about Israeli demographics and its communication and media uses. Then, the major contemporary perspectives about prostitution and its relation to sex-trafficking are presented, followed by the situation of the phenomena in Israel.

2.1 Digital activism

Social media include a variety of platforms, but in this thesis, they are referred to as “a specific set of internet-based, networked communication platforms [that] use a business model of a database built by its own users [and] enable the convergence of public and personal communication.” (Meikle, 2016, p. x). They include platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, Tumblr, Instagram, Blogger, YouTube, etc. They have been generating new genres and modes of communication and redefined the way people engage with media: “media audiences and consumers are now also media users and participants” (Lievrouw, 2014, p. 1). According to Arora (2015), this is enabled particularly by the Web 2.0 of which social media has become synonymous with, that is based on user-generated content, and by that allow two/many-to-many
communication practices and the engagement of and interactivity between users that crosses time and space. This extends not only the Web 1.0 that primarily includes websites but also the traditional mass media, both of which allow one-to-many communications based on a sender-receiver mode. Lievrouw (2014) explains that what differentiates social media with other media forms is also the reason they are referred to as “new”: they are “the product of the continuous interweaving of innovative activities, services, systems, and uses that blend or even eliminate familiar distinctions between telephone calls, movies, letters, newspapers, television, photography, or music” (p. 7). Their complex nature is what makes them tools to gain voice/visibility through alternating “dominant, expected, or accepted” ways of resistance/protest increasingly by more grassroots/bottom-up activists, which she refers to as “alternative/activist new media” (p. 19). Therefore, their use by activists is now diverse and complex, as they have changed the way activists communicate, mobilise support, raise awareness, and even demonstrate.

These engagements are often referred to as digital activism and are extensively varied: some digital tools are utilised to support traditional “offline” protest, while others are embedded solely in internet culture. These platforms allow a broad range of online engagement: from low-level actions, such as likes, shares, and comments—social media common features (Khan, 2017, p. 236)—to high-level ones that require more commitment and potentially creativity (van der Graaf, 2015, p. 10). That said, shares are often used for awareness raising to create virality through the spread of information.

These opportunities also allow for diverse online behaviours, such as trolling, online harassment, and disinformation. Trolls aim to damage online discussions by provoking/silencing participants and disrupting discussions and are motivated by diverse factors (Dahlberg, 2006). Online harassment usually aim at shaming (Sundén & Paasonen, 2018) or hate-speech that seek to plant fear/silence a certain social/demographic group by advocating/threatening/encouraging violent acts, or even only by “foster[ing] a climate of prejudice and intolerance” to fuel discrimination and hostility (Gagliardone, Gal, Alves, & Martinez, 2015, p. 10; Megarry, 2014). Disinformation (also known as “fake news”) is the “dissemination of unsubstantiated rumours and conspiracy theories that often elicit rapid, large, but naïve social responses” (Del Vicario et al., 2016, Abstract).

Consequently, some scholars are more pessimistic about social media’s contributions for democracy and to the “participatory turn” linked to them, while others are more optimistic. Some pessimists argue that the participatory opportunities these platforms enable are decreasing
due to platforms’ commercial nature, the closed, propriety media spaces they provide (because they are based on closed algorithms), their often-changing terms of services (ToS), and the monopoly status they are reaching that are all at odds with activism purposes (Meikle, 2016; van der Graaf, 2015). This is as opposed to Free/Libre and Open Source Software (FLOSS) that are built by and for users. Others argue that the internet’s low-cost and easy accessibility have decreased activists’ commitment level by allowing lower threshold-level practices that diffuse ideas and generate low-commitment support and results in clicktivism/slacktivism: actions that require a click of a button, like donating money or signing e-petitions/emails (Gladwell, 2010; Van Laer & Van Aelst, 2010). Others argue that the participatory potential has resulted in a “noisy” climate: an online environment saturated with information and creates confusion and fragmentation (Moe, 2010), which is especially problematic in awareness raising efforts (Petray, 2011). Others raise questions about access and, thereby, voice, due to a “digital divide” (Hilbert, 2013; Yu, 2006). Another argument centres on the “democratic divide” they have caused because those who use it for protest are already politically active (Norris, 2001), which results in discussions between like-minded people that reinforce existing patterns of political participation and even increase polarisation and prejudice between groups.

Optimists argue that these technologies offer a more horizontal rather than vertical communication model that provides people opportunities to engage in dialogue, ask questions, and share knowledge (Deane, 2004). For Shirky (2011), social media’s potential lies in access to conversation rather than information that can potentially support civil society and the public sphere as a tool not for immediate change measured in weeks/months but rather for long-term change measured in years/decades (p.5, 30). He bases his argument on Katz and Lazarsfeld’s (1955) two-step flow of communication: people form (social) political opinions not solely by being exposed to information (first step), but only after opinions are echoed by peers (second step). It is the second step in which social media can make a difference because it is the place in which people nowadays also debate opinions (p. 34). Other scholars argue that these technologies’ usefulness is most evident when their interactivity and user-management affordances are used alongside mainstream media in contemporary campaigns; for example, when social media viral exposure is used to gain media coverage to infiltrate to as many media channels as possible (Castells, 2009, pp. 346-364).

2.2 Israeli demographics and its communication and media uses

Israel has a population of around 8.6 million that is relatively high in diversity. The majority is Jewish (75%), and the largest minority is Arab with diverse religious beliefs (20%). Even
though the dominant majority of the Jewish population is secular, there are a few major minority-groups that are distinguished by degree of religiosity and ethnicity\(^5\). These include around 1.2 million Russian-immigrants\(^6\), around 140,000 Ethiopian-immigrants, around 700,000 (national) religious, and around 720,000 Orthodox (Central Bureau of Statistics in Israel [CBS], 2008, 2016, 2017; Mann & Lev-On, 2013; Miskar, 2017).

The official and dominant language in Israel is Hebrew\(^7\), and therefore, the dominant mass/alternative media language is in Hebrew, including social media, and is targeted to the majority population: secular-traditional Jews and parts of the minorities\(^8\). According to Mann and Lev-On (2016), there is a general decrease in the use of all traditional media (pp. 30-35) and general increase in online traditional and alternative media through computers, smartphones, and tablets\(^9\) (p. 24), even though there is still an audience for TV-news among those aged 35 and older (pp. 30-35). The third most popular application programme is Facebook (83%), both by women and men (pp. 24-25), and is most popular among those aged 25-34 who are mostly university-level educated (p. 25), but the use is fairly high also by all other age-groups (pp. 30-35). Facebook is also used for political protest directed at more structural social problems and critique against social institutes or even a general social behaviour (Tal, 2016).

### 2.3 Prostitution: definition, major perspectives, and relation to sex-trafficking

The term *prostitution* has various definitions that depend on the perspective taken to this conceptualisation and is influenced by the time and place it is conceptualised in because it is socially constructed and, therefore, rooted in cultural norms and attitudes of human sexuality (Almog, 2010). In this thesis, it is conceptualised as “an institution that allows certain powers of command over one’s person body to be exercised by another”: that is, the client pays money and/or other benefits to secure power over the prostituted person that could not otherwise be

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\(^5\) The reason for the diverse Jewish ethnicities in the country is due to the encouragement of Jews to immigrate to Israel and gain Israeli citizenship under the Law of return—a Zionist-based principle—which makes Israel a society of immigrants in nature.

\(^6\) Russian immigrants emigrated from the former USSR primarily in the mass immigration wave after the end of the Cold War in the 1990s and lasted roughly until the 2000s.

\(^7\) Arabic is the second official language but only for Arab use.

\(^8\) Even though the vast majority of the population is fluent in Hebrew (CBS, 2013) and despite the increasing prevalence in internet use, each minority has different media uses, as most of them also use sectorial media due to difference in language, cultural, and religious needs/restrictions and, thus, lifestyles between them and among themselves. For more detailed information about the minorities’ cultures and lifestyles see Hagal Hahadash (2016) for the Arab community, Eisner (2017a, 2017b) for the Russian community, Paz and Almog (2008) for the Ethiopian community, Miskar (2017) for the religious community, and Mann (2016) for the Orthodox community.

\(^9\) There are around 6.4 million internet users (Mann & Lev-On, 2016).
exercised (O’Connell Davidson, 1998, p. 9). Prostitution includes diverse forms and occurs in various arenas that are often disguised because it is a hidden phenomenon. Prostitution largely involves “heterosexual sexual exchanges”, as the vast majority who engage in it are women, and the vast majority who pay for it are men (Almog, 2008, p. 19; Outshoorn, 2004, p. 3).

The discussion about prostitution has largely been led by feminists for centuries, and has always been linked to sex-trafficking (Outshoorn, 2004, pp. 6-8), or transnational prostitution that is used in this thesis. However, with the proliferation of international tourism and migration in the late 1970s due to improved transportation and communications technologies (i.e. accelerated globalisation processes), growing income divides between the “West” and “East”, and a growing sexual liberalism in the West, the prostitution industry has significantly expanded and dominated by transnational prostitution. Together with the HIV/AIDS spread in the mid-1980s, prostitution has regained political prominence in most Western countries to understand its causes and find possible solutions (Bullough & Bullough, 1996; Outshoorn, 2004, p. 8).

This political prominence reached its peak regarding transitional prostitution in the early 2000s through prevention measures that include public education/awareness raising and simultaneously fighting the demand—traffickers and sex-buyers—and helping victims of trafficking (VoTs) (Scholenhardt, Astill-Torchia, & Jolly, 2012, pp. 417-418).

The proliferation in the issue has brought with it new perspectives by various women’s and feminist groups that resulted in two major ones that can be summed up as the “prostitution-as-harm” (“anti”) narrative and the “sex-work” (“pro”) narrative (Almog, 2016). The former and more dominating view is often referred to as the abolitionist view led by the radical feminists who view prostitution as a form of violence against and objectification of women as a result of

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10 In this thesis, prostitution forms vary from oral sex to sexual intercourse, and prostitutions arenas vary from street-prostitution to indoor-prostitution, such as brothels, massage parlours, hotel rooms, private flats, escort services, as well as striptease clubs, erotic phone calls, and pornography.

11 Even though there are also minors (both boys and girls), transgenders, and men who engage in prostitution.

12 Transnational prostitution refers to women from developing countries who are brought to provide sexual services for male clients in developed countries (Cho, 2016; Outshoorn, 2005; Truong, 1990).

13 This is mostly done through academic research, review of legislations, and reform of policies.

14 These measures were agreed upon during the latest UN debate that resulted with the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children from 2000 that was officially enforced in 2003 and framed under human rights issues. It focuses on transnational prostitution, while leaving domestic one to national contexts (Gallagher, 2001; Huda, 2006: Outshoorn, 2004). The Protocol calls for states to ratify it (currently 171 did so, United Nations Treaty Collection, n.d.) through cooperation between governments and civil society that also include criminalising traffickers (Hahn & Holzscheiter, 2013, p. 502; Scholenhardt et al., 2012, pp. 417-418).

15 Abolitionists/radicals often associated with this view are Dworkin (1993), Farley (1994), and Jeffreys (1997), among others.
a patriarchal society structure in which there are unequal power-relations between women and men, especially between women engaged in prostitution and the men who pay for it. Therefore, prostituted women are viewed as victims of violence/abuse/exploitation trapped in this cycle because they do not have a free choice, but do so for survival. This perspective fights for the women by showing they are commodified victims who suffer from a social infamy tax that shows the difference between prostitution and other professions (Almog, 2008, p. 8). Thereby, they focus on the reasons leading women to engage in prostitution, the harmful effects it entails, and the stigmatised myths about the women. Consequently, this view advocates for prostitution eradication that penalise those who profit from and demand it—the pimps and the consumers—and rehabilitate those who engage in it (also referred to as the “Nordic Model”) (Almog, 2010; Outshoorn, 2004, p. 9).

The second perspective is often referred to as the liberal view led by the liberal feminists who view prostitution as a legitimate occupation in which people buy and sell services (Almog, 2010) and can also be reflected in the term they use—sex-work and sex-workers. This perspective criticises the victimisation and pathologisation they argue the former perspective does to the women (Bjønness, 2012) and focuses on the financial independence, self-expression, and empowerment sex-work provides those engage in it (Miriam, 2005, p. 5). They argue that the harms in prostitution is not inherent but rather the consequence of criminalisation, marginalisation, and stigmatisation, primarily the social moral of prostitutes as “deviants” and the abolitionist one. Consequently, this view advocates for the regulation of sex-work as an occupation (i.e. legalisation) to normalise it and guarantee sex-worker’s rights/conditions (Oselin & Weitzer, 2013, p. 446), while abolish only coerced “transnational sex-work” (Outshoorn, 2004).

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16 The reasons leading women to engage in prostitution are usually financial distress and many also suffered from sexual abuse. The effects it entails often includes physical and emotional harms caused by pimps/traffickers and consumers that often leads to various substance abuse. The most popular stigmatised myths about the women include that of the “happy whore” who engages in it voluntarily and can, therefore, leave the “profession” whenever she likes (Almog, 2008; Gur, 2008).

17 The Nordic Model is a partial decriminalisation legislative policy model that was first known as the “Swedish Model”, as Sweden was the first to implement it in 1999, followed by other Scandinavian countries and more European countries later on.

18 Liberals often associated with this view are Bell (1994), Chapkis (1997), and Pheterson (1996), among others.

19 A term that denotes an active role inherited by their free choice of engaging in this profession (Outshoorn, 2004, p. 9).

20 This model is often associated with the Netherlands and Germany who adopted this model first in the early 2000s, followed by other countries around the world (Santo & Berger, 2015).
2.3.1 Israeli context

In Israel, prostitution and its consumption are legal (except prostitution of minors), while soliciting and pimping to prostitution, operating places for prostitution purposes, and advertising prostitution services are prohibited (Santo & Berger, 2015, p. 79). However, the latter two they have not been enforced up until recent years.

According to Amir and Amir (2004), similarly to many other countries, prostitution became politicised in Israel since the 1990s and initially focused on transnational prostitution by women’s group and seen as men’s violence against women. This was especially due to the Russian immigrant wave that led to a flourishing transnational prostitution arena (p. 144). Following a comprehensive and deep public debate that included diverse actors in the mid-1990s and international pressure from the Palermo Protocol and the U.S, a law against sex-trafficking was legislated in 2001 (pp. 144-157; Levenkron, n.d.) and fully ratified in 2006 (Franco Gal’or, 2010).

However, according to Levenkron (n.d.), while the law and the debate led to a significant decrease in transitional prostitution, it also led to an un-intended counter-reaction: an increase in domestic prostitution that primarily includes Russian immigrants due to their marginal status as newcomers and economic difficulties. This has also led to a perceptual change: while the public and authorities showed sympathy towards transnational prostituted women because they were perceived as victims, they showed contempt towards domestic prostituted women who were seen as “choosers”, which created a dichotomy between “good” and “bad” sexualities (Dahan Klev & Carmi, 2009; Kamir, 2002). According to Amir and Amir (2004), the increase in domestic prostitution led to a renewed debate on prostitution from an abolitionist view in 2007 (pp. 158, 163) and also involved diverse actors who viewed the phenomenon as a gendered social structure (p. 162). The debate led to diverse governmental measures, such as a foundation of committees and programmes, diverse rehabilitation facilities for those engaged in prostitution (Santo & Carmeli, 2016), and even a harm-reduction programme. Furthermore, based on the Nordic Model, the first “prostitution bill” was proposed to the Knesset. However, lack of data on the issue led to the bill’ suspension, and governmental surveys were conducted.

21 The programme is called Izhar Programme, and it includes several centres around the country to reduce the health, social, and economic harms associated with the use of drugs and sexual activities in the streets (mostly include homeless and prostituted people). The programme was first introduced with the HIV/AIDS spreading in the 1980s in the United States and is based on outreach work (Izhar Programme, n.d.)

22 The Knesset is Israel’s legislative authority.

23 Due to financial and methodological difficulties, the surveys were conducted only during 2013/2014, and their results were published in 2015/2016.
(Santo & Carmeli, 2016) about the phenomenon’s scope (Santo & Carmeli, 2016) and the public attitudes towards it (Santo & Friedman, 2015).

The first survey corroborated that the majority of the women are Israeli citizens, primarily Russian immigrants, who are mothers to children and engage in prostitution due to economic distress and want to leave the prostitution world, but need financial help to do so. Like in many other countries, the prostitution scene flourishes on the internet. Prostitution consumers, however, were not researched at all (as it is in general), but it is estimated that prostituted women are visited one million times a year. Service organisations reveal that the vast majority of the consumers are men who come from all segments of society, age-groups, income, and education levels (Levenkron, n.d.). They also reveal increasing number of prostituted transgenders in addition to reoccurring transnational prostitution.

The second survey revealed that while the majority of the public understands the physical and psychological harms prostitution entails, that prostitution is offensive to human dignity, and that most of the women want to leave it, it still believes that women have the right to sell their own bodies. Additionally, while the majority believes that the state should actively reduce the phenomenon’s dimensions, it thinks it should do so by either increasingly enforcing prostitution services’ advertisement or legalising the phenomenon altogether. Only a small majority believes in punishing the clients, not even necessarily criminalising them.

Since the first 2008-proposed bill that never passed in the Knesset, the political battle against the phenomenon has only increased and received a new pick with a new bill as a result of continuous labour by the organisations that have been fighting the phenomenon for decades and have also semi-officially started collaborating in 2015 (CAP). However, even though their efforts are based on research and intimate knowledge from being service providers in the past/present, efforts to raise public awareness had been limited both time- or focus-wise and neither actively include women and transgenders engaged in/survivors of prostitution nor focus on prostitution consumers. The discourse about domestic prostitution also started to

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24 This is a very rough and inaccurate estimation that only exists to provide a basic understanding about the phenomenon (The Open University, 2018).

25 This is primarily from Eastern European countries, prominently Ukraine and Georgia, due to a change in policy for visas to increase tourism (in 2011 and 2013 respectively) (Kahana, 2018).

26 After the first bill, two more bills were proposed up until 2017. The latest bill in 2017 received the highest support thus far—74MKs—and it is focused not solely on consumers’ criminalisation, but mostly on the rehabilitation of those engaged in it.
widen in the media around three years ago with the suicide of a prostituted woman27 (Lee, 2017) and with the development in the legislation efforts28 (The Open University, 2018).

3 Case presentation: When He Pays/Me29

The WHP/M campaign contains two inter-related projects: When He Pays (the male-project, from now on) and When He Pays Me (the female-project, from now on). The male-project was created in 2014 with a Tumblr blog-page, in which the activist who conducts the campaign posted anonymous quotes (“copy-paste” style) that were taken from different public online-forums of paid-sex consumers from the largest Israeli sex-portal30. The portal includes 28 forums divided into various preferences and have around 25,000 active users. The majority are open to the public: people can enter them and read the messages. The forums offer a place for paid-sex consumers to compare their experiences and provide “recommendations” about the women. The quotes include the consumers’ reports about their “customers’ experiences” by reviewing, ranking, recommending, comparing between, and warning against prostituted women with whom they had encounters. The blog-page was then added a Facebook cause-Page and a Twitter-page. The female-project was created a year later, in 2015, with another Tumblr blog-page in which the creator posted anonymous testimonies of women and transgenders31 in and survivors of prostitution in which they describe the industry and encounters with consumers from their perspectives32 (Lee, 2015). It was then added a Facebook cause-Page.

Overall, the campaign has six digital platforms that are linked to each other, but the campaign’s main platform is the Facebook-Pages, and the activist stopped the activity on the Tumblr-Pages and the Twitter-Page in 2016. The Facebook Pages are “cause” Pages provided by Facebook cost-free for social campaigns because they initially received more attention in the news-feed than personal accounts, allow admins to create “organic content” instead of sharing it, and provide statistical data about the users. Users can comment on the content on the Wall—the

27 The woman was a Russian immigrant who was known as Jessica, and she hung herself in 2015 in the known Tel-Aviv-based brothel she lived in. Her suicide received relatively high media attention (Lee, 2017).
28 There has been a gradual increase in media attention also about consumers and the new bill, especially since 2017 when efforts about legislation started to increase significantly (The Open University, 2018).
29 The information about the case study was taken from interviews with the campaign’s creator, both the one I conducted with her and the ones in the media texts, unless stated otherwise.
30 At the time of writing, there are 563 quotes on the blog-page. The Tumblr blog-page was also inspired by the British page The Invisible Men that features quotes from UK-based consumers and has since been established in France and Germany (Lee, 2015).
31 Since the activist refers to transgenders as women in the campaign, as the majority define themselves as such, I continue to refer to both as women similarly to the activist.
32 At the time of writing, there are 45 testimonies on the blog-page.
Page’s most active place—in addition to sending private messages to administrators. The activist is the sole administrator of the Pages and the only one who publishes posts that include the sharing of the quotes and testimonies from the two Tumblr-pages and new ones after 2016 in addition to local and global diverse prostitution-related material.

The activist who created the campaign has an extensive intimate knowledge about the industry from having volunteering in one of Izhar Programme centres and working in one of the CAPs service providers and awareness raising NGOs (Toda’a Institute), alongside CAP’s political work, for the past ten years. The personal connections with prostituted women are what led her to make the connection between prostitution, both domestic and transnational, and the violence it inherits to the women by the male consumers in addition to the industry’s complexities/nuances. Even though she believes in the new bill as it is comprehensive and local-sensitive, she believes that it can be effective only once the public understands the problems prostitution inherits. However, since she was turned down when suggesting a public awareness campaign while aiding CAP with the newest legislation, she created the campaign voluntarily and left the organisations’ work in 2016 to focus on the campaign and be simultaneously involved in various additional projects on the issue.

Consequently, her main strategy was starting a new, active, long-term discourse about the prostitution world that is widened, inclusive, complicated, and deepened and raises awareness about the prostitution world by focusing on revealing the problems it inherits. For her, a wider discourse includes the media and penetrates other areas in life besides the political and academic arenas to reach the wider public that includes both women and men, as she believes that the current discourse is too gendered instead of being a human-rights issue. An active discourse includes a public discussion/debate. An inclusive discourse includes the original hidden voices of the prostitution world, the various women engaged in and survived it, including sex-workers, the men who consume it, and oppositional voices, such as pro-legalisation/liberal advocates, etc. This is as opposed to the pathologising discourse she believes the abolitionist discourse advances by talking for and about the women instead of including them in interventions and by keeping the consumers hidden from the public eye instead of focusing on their role in the industry. A complicated and deeper discourse includes a variety of these voices’ stories/experiences instead of the current reductive ones through statistics and slogans. Lastly, a long-term discourse is one that lasts years and decades rather than days or months.

Thereby, the activists has several goals with the campaign on different time-levels that are all a part of a change process. The relatively short-term goal of several years is inspiring the people
currently engaged in the prostitution discourse, such as practitioners, policy-makers, and academics, to change the current discourse to a similar wider one and inspire people from the general public, such as journalists, artists, and activists to start a similar new discourse in other areas of life, such as the media, arts, culture, etc. The longer-term goals include a change of the following:

1. Changing public’s misperceptions and attitudes about the phenomenon by dismantling the myths and stigmas it currently holds on the women and the consumers and revealing the role of the men in the industry
2. Changing consumers’ behaviour (i.e. stop consuming prostitution) by changing their similar misperceptions and also their dissociation by showing them their actions and their consequences in a different light
3. Deterring potential consumers from consuming prostitution by changing their similar misperceptions
4. Countering the liberal prostitution discourse by showing the violence prostitution inherits that is not inherited in other professions

The even longer-term goal that would take decades is that women in and especially survivours of prostitution would lead the discourse and struggle, which will happen once they gain the legitimacy to reveal themselves instead of being ashamed.

Lastly, each project has specific goals: the male-project’s main goal is diverting the focus to the hidden and ignored male consumers’ voices and actions who are a part of the wider public. The female-projects’ main goal is providing a platform for women in and survivours of prostitution to feel comfortable to voice themselves and share their views on this industry and their thoughts/experiences of the consumers and the acts (as well as warn one another about especially violent consumers), and by that, constitute a “mirror image” to the male-project.

To execute the strategy and reach the campaign’s goals, the activist uses varied tactics that will be discussed in the analysis section.

4 Literature review

In the following section, current research on awareness activist efforts about prostitution is presented. Due to the focus on transnational prostitution rather than domestic one, the latter is scarcely researched. Instead, research is focused on two main topics: transnational prostitution and sex-work, both digital and non-digital efforts. Even though there is some research on these
efforts on social media platforms that is presented below, there is no research focused solely on Facebook, to my knowledge. Thereby, in the following, research about transnational prostitution and activism is presented, followed by sex-work and activism.

4.1 Transnational prostitution and activism

Awareness education campaigns about transnational prostitution, also referred to as “end-demand” campaigns, often link transnational prostitution to domestic one because many are based on an abolitionist discourse (O’Brien, 2016; Pajnik & Renault, 2014, pp. 476, 478). However, domestic prostitution that in many countries is often more prevalent than transnational one is usually not focused enough, and thereby ignore its extent and the people trapped in it (Ray, 2006, p. 916).

These awareness campaigns tend to target three kinds of audiences: (1) officials likely to come in contact with VoTs (2) legislators (3) the general public (Andrijasevic & Anderson, 2009, p. 153; O’Brien, 2016, pp. 206-207), and some also simultaneously target the demand—active and potential sex consumers (Davy, 2016, p. 490). Their goal is to mobilise people for action as donating money and signing petitions, shape policy, change prostitution consumers’ behaviours and deter potential ones, but mostly shape the wider public understanding of the issue (Andrijasevic & Anderson, 2009; Majic, 2017b; O’Brien, 2016, pp. 206-207). This is mostly done through information dissemination about VoTs, causes, possible solutions, and occasionally offenders by conveying “a snapshot of human trafficking” (O’Brien, 2016, pp. 206-207). The media formats used in these campaigns have largely been mass media, such as print media (O’Brien, 2013, p. 315), TV through public service announcements (PSAs) (Majic, 2017b), and radio (Gould, 2010). With the rise of the internet, websites (Pajnik & Renault, 2014), short video-clips (O’Brien, 2013; 2016), and social media platforms (Gong, 2015) have been added. Even though mass media can be viewed as more restricting format than digital tools, the literature reveals different uses in the latter: many of the campaigns use one-way communication and reduced designed messages when using mass media and websites, while there seems to be a rise in more complexified messages and dialogic communication when YouTube video-clips and social media platforms are used, respectively. The latter is especially used the less formal the website to which social media platforms are connected (Pajnik & Renault, 2014, p. 473).

When disseminating information about trafficked people, some of the primary techniques is eliciting emotional responses as outrage and a shock-effect through imagery and story-telling
in the form of VoTs’ “true stories” in addition to exaggerated statistics. However, research reveals that imagery and story-telling are used in campaigns that use one-way mass communication (O’Brien, 2013), and videos and story-telling in some that use internet-based video-clips (Stiles, 2012; Yick & Shapira, 2010) and even in many that use social media (Gong, 2015). Particularly in the latter, research reveals they are used to elicit compassion to inspire people to act by planting “hope in small victories” (Gong, 2015, pp. 94-95). Statistics are only added in campaigns that use one-way communication (Gould, 2010; Scholoenhardt et al., 2012; Weitzer, 2007) and are consciously being avoided in many that use social media to refrain from misleading the public with unreliable figures and to personify them and avoid the shock-effect they are believed to contribute to (Gong, 2015).

Story-telling is the act of providing first-person narratives that introduce marginalised voices and their varied experiences/stories/feelings/opinions (Johnson, 2013). However, even though these testimonies inherit VoTs’ voice and agency and, thus, participation (Johnson, 2013), Bergquist (2015) suggests that these stories are often manipulated by either specifically choosing or editing them to fit a campaign’s message/purpose and highlighting a “rescue-and-victim” narrative (p. 316). This depicts these populations in a way that reduces them to a specific stereotyped representation of a victim that primarily includes a very abused and exploited (Andrijasevic & Anderson, 2009; Gould, 2010; Hoyle, Bosworth & Dempsey, 2011; O’Brien, 2013), passive (Aradau, 2004; Ray, 2006; Scholoenhardt et al., 2012), vulnerable, and a weak image of a women/girl. They are usually created through a descriptive depiction of a certain set of contested experiences (Andrijasevic & Anderson, 2009) that create a dichotomy between “ideal” and “real” victims whose experiences are often far more nuanced and complicated (Hoyle et al., 2011).

Aradau (2004) sees the victim image as a “politics of pity” and Hoyle et al. (2011) as a “language of slavery” that also misleads the public “understanding of the range of causes and experiences of trafficking” (p. 314) and results with misinformation (Scholoenhardt et al., 2012). Thereby, these practices do not only disempower the women and, thus, marginalise them again, but they also trivialise their experiences and create new stereotypes/myths and apathy towards them (Scholoenhardt et al., 2012, pp. 424-425). This is significant because the women’s image, as the wider understanding of the issue, is prominently established through public discourse, media, and fiction in which NGOs, especially large and known ones, play an educative role (Stoltz, 2005).
Campaigns that also provide the causes of trafficking present varied causes that primarily include the demand for commercial-sex as the root problem and, thus sex-buyers as the problem (O’Brien, 2013, 2016). Research reveals that in campaigns that use one-way communication, sex-buyers are depicted similarly to the victims, as “ideal offenders” or “villains” (O’Brien, 2016), which simplifies the problem’s cause because no other structural problems are provided, such as poverty, globalisation processes, gender inequalities, etc. (Choi-Fitzpatrick, 2016; Gould, 2010; Majic, 2017b; O’Brien, 2013, 2016; Weitzer, 2007). However, these villains are rarely pictorially/characteristically depicted/discussed but are, instead, intentionally constructed through VoTs’ images and stories, “leaving it to the audience to draw conclusions about the action and motivations of these offenders” as socially undesirable figures who engage in socially undesirably acts (O’Brien, 2016, pp. 209-211). Some also use explicit declarations to fight the demand (Choi-Fitzpatrick, 2016; Gould, 2010; O’Brien, 2016; Weitzer, 2007), and others portray them as sexual predators who objectify women (Gould, 2010, p. 38; Majic, 2017b).

Even in the only study I found that investigated an end-demand local domestic prostitution campaign through print ads and a TV-based PSA, it was found that prostitution consumers were portrayed symbolically and directed declarations at, while their predatory nature was the cause for prostitution. However, the women and particularly girls were only symbolically alluded to as vulnerable through symbolic images (Majic, 2017b).

However, research on internet-based video-clips campaigns found more complex messaging. Stiles (2012) found that even though VoTs were portrayed as passive victimised girls through story-telling, they were portrayed with some depth and agency without objectifying them even while showing the violence inherited in transnational prostitution (p. 201). Arthurs (2012) found that campaigns that used irony properly in their video-clips avoided simplifying this complex issue and controlling people’s reactions that are often used in emotional appeals. Their effectiveness requires campaigners to loosen their control over their audiences because this technique depends on people’s ability to rely on their own interpretations that are based on their knowledge and assumptions about the issue and negotiate meanings that require critical reflection and wider engagement with the issue (pp. 473, 383–484). This is even more pertinent in digital tools, “where the context is less easily managed than in traditional media.” (p. 484)

Research that examined campaigns that also utilised social media found that while some reiterated simplified messaging for clicktivist actions (Majic, 2017a; Steele & Shores, 2014, 2015), others used it for dialogic communication (Gong, 2015). Even though the former raised
significant awareness due to the celebrity-status of those who conducted it, it reiterated similar portrayals to campaigns that use one-way communication and used Facebook to engage users for meaningless actions. In the latter, though, social media platforms were used for dialogic communication in which people were seen as participants in a discussion because “social media is not a megaphone, it’s a conversation.” (Gong, 2015, p. 97). Activists focused on interacting/engaging with users to sustain their interest, primarily answer questions and thank their contributions, even if for online actions, such as donations and signing e-petitions/e-mails, which was accompanied with the posting of field-activists’ videos.

4.2 Sex-work and activism

Other kinds of awareness efforts are promoted by activists who view prostitution as sex-work, either from experience or due to support (Garofalo, 2010; Oselin & Weitzer, 2013, p. 457). Their efforts are focused on raising sex-workers’ voices and participation in public debates through self-representation to counter both public and abolitionist stereotypes (Garofalo, 2010) and include activism both on the individual- and group-level, as they are less formally organised than the abolitionist movement (Hahn & Holzscheiter, 2013; Pajnik and Renault, 2014). However, research reveals that their public awareness efforts are significantly smaller in scale than the abolitionists and focus more on public protests followed by mass media appearances in which information is disseminated and local community educational campaigns that are saved for activists willing to be exposed (Oselin & Weitzer, 2013). Additionally, some activists produce “experiential knowledge”: knowledge production based on one’s own experiences (Feldman, 2014). Thereby, there is scarce research on awareness campaigns. The only study I found investigated a short-term local American sex-workers’ ad-based awareness campaign by a local organisation run by and for sex-workers. Majic (2014) found that even though they also used images and slogans, they portrayed sex-workers as active people in a positive rather than a victimising light and used face-to-face interviews communication from which quotes of sex-workers and their closed ones were taken and placed on the ads (pp. 116-117). Some local public discussion was generated in people’s comments to media texts that reported about the campaign (pp. 116-118).

With the rise of the internet, however, sex-workers also started using more digital tools in their awareness efforts (Feldman, 2014, p. 245). Social media platforms, primarily Facebook, are often used as official Pages (Pajnik & Renault, 2014). Blogs are also often either used by solo-activists for sharing their stories or by activist groups who add a political focus (Feldman, 2014, p. 244). One such American-based activists’ blog was researched by Feldman (2014) who found
it was used as a tool to raise (current and former) sex-workers’ voices by producing experiential knowledge through a presentation of their own opinions on and analyses of representations of sex-work in various fields (pp. 253-254). It also provided a safe space for more sex-workers to publicly participate in these efforts without risking exposing themselves that was allowed by the general virtual anonymity the internet provides, which also contributed to their sense of community. By that, it also provided a space to share more complex and nuanced sex-work experiences (pp. 248-250). Additionally, it provided a space for constructive discussions that the comments section enables and was used not only among sex-work supporters but also between them and abolitionists (pp. 255-257). Special efforts were even occasionally used to generate more discussions through posting people’s opinions by admins, both sex-workers’ and abolitionists’ (p. 247).

However, these efforts had several major limitations. Firstly, even though it had regular readership, it was relatively low, as no special efforts were made to expose the blog, which decreased its affect. Secondly, admins instructed users to ignore trolls without explaining how they recognised them, and activists sometimes dismissed and even ridiculed commenters who had disagreed with some of their views, which potentially deter people from engaging in discussions and potential activists from becoming supporters. This was strengthened by posts’ occasional deletion and alternation (pp. 258-260), all of which decreased the blog’s and admins’ transparency. Lastly, even though sex-workers who shared their stories showed more nuanced experiences and opinions, admins preferred more positive and mundane than negative ones to provide counter-narratives to the abolitionist one, despite one of the movement’s major goals of showing the validity of the diverse, complex, and unfiltered sex-work experiences and perspectives (pp. 250-252, 254-255). This did not only deter those with more negative experiences to participate, but also potentially strengthened opponents further to dismiss these experiences because they strengthen the “happy hooker” myth (p. 260) and to show more complex experiences.

5 Theoretical framework: Participatory communication

PC is a term used in ComDev studies that has had varied interpretations and definitions, but generally refers to one of the two main paradigms that have dominated the field since the 1950s (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009). The competing paradigm is the diffusion/modernisation one that has dominated the field in its beginning. Both paradigms have been informed by various
theories and utilised by different communication strategies and practices, and they co-exist until today (Tufte, 2017). To understand PC, the diffusion paradigm must first be introduced.

ComDev emerged after World War II in the form of technologically-, economically-, and politically-driven foreign aid investment programmes by Western countries to developing countries through bi/multi-lateral institutions to promote development (Wilkins, 2015) and “rescue” them from post-colonial degradation (Clammer, 2012). The dominant paradigm then was the modernisation one that focused on individual behavioural change models through information dissemination that persuaded people to adopt new behaviours/opinions because problems were seen as lack of information/knowledge (Waisbord, 2001). This included linear, top-down, one-way, sender-receiver mass communication (radio, cinema, TV, and print), and externally-based, relatively short-term interventions with pre-defined goals and solutions that were measured through quantifiable statistical data (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009, pp. 39, 45; Waisbord, 2001, p. 4). Later on, this model was heavily influenced by social marketing approaches that relied on consumer behaviour theories and the earlier-mentioned Katz and Lazarsfeld’s (1955) communication theory.

In the late 1960s, dependency theorists from Latin America and Asia started criticizing this paradigm for being hierarchical, ethnocentric, and a-contextual (Wilkins, 2015) because it lacked communities’ participation, which led to various PC-based theories to emerge (Waisbord, 2014, pp. 16-18). This model has also brought with it the expansion of ComDev to a broader interest in social change strategic, deliberative initiatives in general by any group, in any geographical setting (Tuft & Mefalopulos, 2009, p. 10; Wilkins, 2015). However, participation has been interpreted in various ways even though all approaches are based on the core principles of Freire’s (1970) liberating pedagogy most influential work (Cadiz, 2005). The model’s inter-related principles used in this thesis are closely based on Freire’s (1970) model adapted from Cadiz (2005) and Tuft and Mefalopulos (2009) and expanded upon by more recent scholars.

According to Tuft and Mefalopulos (2009), PC’s central principle is a free, open, transparent, two-way communication process in the form of a dialogue that engages people in a discussion (i.e. dialogic communication) (pp. 19, 26). In the dialogue, people are provided time and space to voice/express themselves, especially marginalised, voiceless groups (p. 20), by sharing concerns/information/opinions/experiences, identifying problems, and finding their potential solutions (Waisbord, 2014). As there is always a catalyst in dialogic communication, its role transforms from a transmitter who disseminates specific ideas/messages that prescribe solutions
to pre-defined problems to a facilitator/mediator, and even conflict negotiator, who “pose (potential) problems” through “thought-provoking questions” elicited from people’s existing knowledge/experiences (Cadiz, 2005, pp. 147-148).

Thereby, there is consciousness to the power-relations present in any human relationship (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009, p. 20) that emphasises the equality between the catalyst (“change agent”) and stakeholders (the participants in the dialogue) by shifting the power—thinking and deciding—to the latter, especially to the people the change is designed for. Therefore, stakeholders are no longer seen as passive audiences but as equal “partners” (Cadiz, 2005, p. 147). Communication is seen as a process of interaction, meaning making, and education (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009) and even as reciprocal collaboration (Servaes, 2003) and, therefore, as horizontal, democratic, and “bottom-up”—the dialogue is inclusive and open to diverse ideas (Waisbord, 2014, pp. 158-159).

Even though engaging all stakeholders in every step is never possible (and often not even desirable) (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009, p. 29), the principle is to engage a range of people in this negotiation (Lennie & Tacchi, 2013, p. 12). Participatory processes can even exclude certain people unless special efforts are made to include them (Grubb & Tacchi, 2008; Lennie, 2005). Therefore, according to Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009), the medium of communication is then determined according to whether it stimulates dialogic communication with the group’s participants to voice themselves and engage in public debate, especially voiceless groups (p. 20). This can vary from interpersonal, face-to-face communication to mediated communication on social media that is crucial in the rapid changes in ICTs nowadays, which also leads to issues of “visibility and voice in the mediated public sphere.” (p. 21).

The foundation of PC is in praxis: a cycle of action and reflection process in a reflexive, inductive approach that includes critical reflection and collective action through a constant process of learning (Cadiz, 2005; Wilkins, 2015). As an action-oriented approach, the goal of communication is conscientization: “action-oriented awareness raising” (Tufte and Mefalopulos, 2009, p. 20) through love/care, faith, hope, humility, and commitment—the five values on which PC is based—that require an active, non-judgmental listening (Cadiz, 2005; Waisbord, 2001, p. 19) and leads to mutual trust (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009, p. 20). In the dialogical process, the participants increase their willingness to take risks and engage in an action to achieve social change, based on a deeper understanding of their situation even if the action/change is uncomfortable (Cadiz, 2005, p. 149). In this way, social change process is initiated from within the participants’ group rather than from outside-experts (Cadiz, 2005), and
the communication provides a sense of community/ownership to participants and leads to individual/community empowerment—the highest form of participation (Arnstein, 1969; Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009, pp. 6-7)—that can be seen in the “ability to communicate one’s own stories” (Wilkins, 2015, “Communicating about Development”).

According to Waisbord (2014), PC involves varied, multi-channeled, and longitudinal strategic goals and tactics on different levels: individual, community, social/structural, or combined. The latter is often the case because social changes are understood as complex processes that often involve multiple causes and require multiple solutions on multiple levels—broader socio-cultural-political dimensions (pp. 160, 162). They may include mended persuasion tactics that require creativity and are flexible and adaptable to “unexpected circumstances” and “strategic junctures”: the consideration of specific cultural/political contexts that include learning from experiences and considering obstacles and opportunities (pp. 160-164). PC is, then, considered human-centered, context-specific—efforts are grounded in local knowledge—and process-oriented (Waisbord, 2001, pp.18-19), circular, open-ended (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009, p. 25), and as long-term process of structural sustainable change (Waisbord, 2014) that addresses those who suffer the most economically/politically (Wilkins, 2015).

PC’s critiques centre on being time- and resources-consuming (Lennie & Tacchi, 2013) or on it being a buzz-phrase, an over-used rhetorical instrument, especially by larger organisations who translate participation and empowerment to fit their agenda (Batliwala, 2010; Cornwall, 2010).

6 Methodology

The following section describes the philosophical view, methodological approach, and methods and analysis process used in the thesis, as well as ethical considerations.

6.1 Philosophical view and reflexivity

The perspective adopted in this paper is a social constructionist one in which there is no one external objective “reality” or “truth”, but multiple subjective realities because reality and knowledge are constructed by people and, therefore, by researchers and participants (Merriam, 2014, pp. 8-9). These are constructed through the different meanings we attach and, therefore, interpretations we give to events based on our different assumptions, backgrounds, and previous experiences—social contexts and interactions (Cresswell, 2007, pp. 20-21). This approach is in line with the qualitative interpretative research design used in this thesis—a case study—and
the interpretative methods used to investigate the case—qualitative interviewing and media texts analysis that require flexibility and reflexiveness during the research (Evers & Von Staa, 2010).

I also believe that my own subjectivity—my personal interest in, knowledge about, and activism with prostituted women/girls in Israel (where I was born and grew up) and Sweden (where I currently live)—could contribute to the research by enriching it through my informed interpretations (Peshkin, 1988, p. 18). My interest in the issue, my encounter with the campaign several years ago and my following it since, and my lack of prior knowledge about social media also led to the choice of the campaign as this thesis’ case study: I genuinely wanted to gain deeper insights about the ways social media can be used as tools to enable participation in awareness efforts about prostitution. Thereby, I was conscious and reflexive throughout the research to reduce bias and because of two additional reasons: (1) the difference between the data language and reported language that adds another dimension to the study’s interpretative aspect (2) as a female who investigates an issue involving violence against women, special sensitivity to the data is required, especially while reading the quotes and testimonies that evoke strong reactions that may have been different for a male-researcher.

6.2 Methodological approach

A case study approach was chosen because, according to Simons (2009), it strives to explore social phenomena in-depth from diverse perspectives to capture their uniqueness and complexities in “real life” contexts (p. 27) through systematic inquiry (p. 25) and “thick description” (Geertz, 1973) over statistical generalisations (Torrance, 2004). This is usually done through triangulation—the use of multiple data sources that deepens and enriches the analysis, reduces bias, and reflects social phenomena’s complexities—in an inductive and deductive iterative process of data collection and analysis that occur simultaneously and allow researchers consider broader socio-cultural-political contexts and modify inquiries (Evers & Von Staa, 2010, pp. 749-751). This approach is also appropriate when researching (potentially) PC-based projects, as these consider social phenomena’ complexities of social rooted in specific contexts and broader dimensions (Lennie & Tacci, 2013).

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33 Qualitative methodologies and methods such as case studies, interviews, and media texts analyses are all interpretative in nature: case studies seek to uncover phenomena’s meanings (Merriam, 2014), interviews are seen as collaborative interactions and as situated knowledge (Fontana, 2003; Warren, 2002), and texts are seen as polysemic (Lockyer, 2008).
6.3 Data collection and analysis process

The data collection began with one semi-structured, in-depth interview with the activist who created the campaign. Interviewing was chosen to gain first-hand information and as much context about the campaign, specifically about its initial reasons, goals, strategies, and tactics, as interviews are a valid and common method for researchers to obtain knowledge about topics (Brinkmann, 2008), especially in qualitative case studies (Evers & Von Staa, 2010). A semi-structured, in-depth, form of interviewing was chosen because it allows enough room for spontaneous answers not initially planned to be explored because the questions are open-ended (Brinkmann, 2008).

The interview was conducted via skype. It lasted two hours and fifteen minutes, and it was conducted in Hebrew, recorded, and simultaneously transcribed and translated into English. The interview began with my first general, open-ended question about the campaign’s beginning and continued with different topics based on the interviewee’s answers and simultaneously followed the topic-points in my interview-guide. The interview resulted with rich information. The transcribed interview was then analysed qualitatively by being iteratively and systematically highlighted for themes, patterns, and quotes to provide thick description (Geertz, 1973). Follow-up clarification questions were then sent via email, and the answers were synthesised with the interview data.

In the initial stage of the thesis, my intention was to qualitatively explore the connection between the activist’s “intentions” with the male Facebook-Page (i.e. goals, strategies, and tactics) and what actually occurs in it. As the interview resulted in much richer and unexpected information, and as I realised that examining the Facebook-Page qualitatively would be out of the scope of this thesis, I decided to refocus my study on the campaign’s tactics and include both projects. To enrich my data, as the campaign had received media attention, I added online media texts that report about the campaign. This was instead of adding the typically-used documents produced by organisations (Evers & Von Staa, 2010).

To find online texts about the campaign, Google was used as the search engine. The keywords used were the name of the projects, “Tali Koral” (the activist’s name), and their combination for cross-referencing. During the search, I noticed that the campaign had gained media attention.

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34 Since interviewing in this thesis is viewed as situated knowledge that requires specific context, each text provided not only new information but particular one as well that enriched the analysis.
in roughly three main time-periods\(^\text{35}\). Additionally, I noticed that many of the media sources had published several articles about the campaign in different time-periods. To exhaust the results and not be dependant solely on Google search, I searched for more articles in every media source using the same keywords. The results yielded 35 media texts. Each text was then analysed similarly to the interview data, and in the process, I eliminated texts that did not add new information. In total, 22 texts were left, from which 18 included interviews with the activist. These 18 texts were used for both analysis and context, while the rest of the 4 were used only for context (see Appendix for the complete texts’ list). The media texts that were then used were in the form of written articles in online newspapers, magazines, blogs, and portals (15 texts), and oral interviews with the activist (2 podcasts and 1 YouTube video). The data used in the analysis included only the activist’s quotes. The data was simultaneously transcribed, translated, and then analysed, and the findings from both data sources (i.e. interview- and media texts-data) were synthesised.

### 6.4 Ethics in research

There were no ethical considerations regarding the media texts, as they are intended for public use. Regarding the interview, however, ethical considerations regarding trust and honesty (Brinkmann, 2008) were taken: In the beginning of the interview, I received verbal consent from the activist to record and use the interview in my thesis. I also introduced my study’s topic, my connection to it, expressed my gratitude for her participation, and guaranteed confidentiality. Anonymity was not relevant to assure as the activist has been exposed in the media due to the media exposure the campaign had received and, thus, also mentioned in the used texts. Both data sources were treated with the most diligence and impartially to ensure the most accuracy.

### 7 Analysis

In this section, I present the case study’s empirical descriptive findings and analyse them through my theoretical framework—PC—to answer my research questions. This is accompanied with illustrative quotes from the various interviews with the activist. Simultaneously, the findings are discussed in relation to the literature review and background sections.

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\(^{35}\) The time periods are roughly the following: September-November 2014, after the male-campaign was initiated; December 2015, after the female-campaign was initiated; and August-December 2016, after the male-Facebook Page was blocked by Facebook (which will be discussed in the analysis section).
Similarly to campaigns that use social media platforms for dialogic communication in which people are seen as participants in a discussion rather than as audiences (Gong, 2015), the activist uses PC’s central principle—a free, open, transparent communication process in the form of a dialogue that engages people in a discussion (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009)—as the campaign’s main tool to create an active discourse. To do so, she chose Facebook as the campaign’s main platform because of its popularity in Israel and the affordances it provides to share content to a large number of people cost-free through a friendly cause-Page interface that allows to operate the campaign rather easily, to create diverse content, and to engage people in discussions. However, unlike campaigns that primarily use it to sustain users and mobilise for online action as signing e-petitions/emails and donations (Gong, 2015), this dialogue can be seen in the campaign’s tactics on several levels with a range of people (Lennie & Tacchi, 2013) to raise their awareness and inspire them for more active actions, both online and offline. These people include the general public, both women and men, journalists, and activists; people currently engaged in the prostitution discourse, both abolitionist practitioners, politicians, academics, and liberals; active and potential prostitution consumers; and the people whom the change is for who are especially important (Lennie & Tacchi, 2013)—women in and survivors of prostitution with diverse experiences who define themselves in various ways, including sex-workers. The last group is a special one with which the activist has a different dialogue that will be discussed later on.

By including this range of people, it is her way of creating an inclusive and wider discourse than the current political and academic ones. The major dialogue occurs on the Walls of the two projects’ Facebook-Pages in which she posts content for people to comment on and discuss. This is reinforced in her minimal interference in the discussion to create a “natural” conversation and only “guide” it when necessary, like clarifying information and answer questions. In this way, people are provided time and space to voice/express themselves (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009). No comments are alternated/deleted, especially not by those who hold opposing views, and trolls (Dahlberg, 2006) are not instructed to be ignored, which adds to the dialogue’s transparency, unlike the sex-workers’ blog use (Feldman, 2014).

She also makes special efforts to include those who are potentially excluded (Grubb & Tacchi, 2008; Lennie, 2005) that requires time and even an emotional toll on behalf of the activist, and they exist on two levels: the general campaign and the discussion level. On the campaign level, the content she publishes includes roughly three kinds of posts: (1) the uncensored male-quotes (2) the uncensored female-testimonies (3) diversified texts about and by people from the Israeli
and global prostitution industry. By that, the campaign is based on the authentic voices of the prostitution industry that are usually excluded from the debate and awareness efforts.

The quotes’ publication may seem at first as simplistic, especially because they are uncensored, copy-paste style, and are not followed by any messages that require time to design. However, they require time and emotional efforts because of several reasons. Firstly, rather than simply collecting quotes to publish, the activist follows the consumers’ discussions in the forums to receive a wider context and understand their behaviours. Since a forum is a small community, and since every community has its own intricacies—terms and meanings of its own—so do these forums. A small example is understanding which comments are genuine and which are fake. Secondly, the consumers’ exposure to the campaign and the activist’s exposure in the media have created a kind of dynamics between some of them and the activist for periods of time during the campaign so far: some consumers have either tried to sabotage the campaign by changing their messages so they will not match the quotes she publishes and they would seem as disinformation or even write hurtful messages directed at the activist. While the activist generally conceives this dynamics as “one of the most interesting and important aspect of the campaign”, these are time-and emotion-consuming.

Similarly, with the testimonies’ publication, even though the activist publishes testimonies without manipulation—unselectively and unedited—she naturally does not receive as many testimonies as the quotes, which is due to the women’s various psychological/emotional conditions. The activist’s intimate knowledge about these is also what makes it difficult for her to reach out to women to collect more—genuine concern for their health. Instead, it requires time to search for testimonies from other online and offline platforms. Unlike the blog-based campaign that advances one-dimensional experiences (Feldman, 2014), when actively inviting women to share and searching for testimonies, she explicitly invites women to share diverse experiences, including sex-workers’ positive ones that are excluded from the abolitionist discourse, even if she does not receive as many from the latter. Likewise, finding additional varied texts about and from within the industry on different online sources requires additional efforts.

As part of both the campaign and discussion levels, the activist makes special efforts to include more people from the general population, unlike the blog-based campaign in which no efforts at all were made to expose it and decreased its effect (Feldman, 2014). First, since she is aware that certain age-groups use Facebook less than others (Mann & Lev-On, 2016) and to the campaign’s limited virality due to the internet’s general noisy climate (Moe, 2010) that makes
it harder for social campaigns to stand out (Petray, 2011), she knew the campaign’s special character, specifically the male-quotes that will be discussed further, would attract journalists’ attention and expose the campaign on other media channels, such as traditional and alternative mass and digital media formats. In that way, people could also discuss the campaign in other platforms and mediums, including face-to-face communication with peers, colleagues, etc. Since I was not active on Facebook before, this is the way I personally discovered the campaign—an article in an Israeli digital newspaper— which is one of the texts used as data for the thesis. Special efforts were required for interviews with journalists. Additionally, she is constantly making efforts to expose the campaign further on Facebook and among its followers. The former is through inter-personal communication by inviting people and groups she interacts with on Facebook to follow the campaign. The latter is by timing her posts’ and the intervals between them, among others tactics she has used from learning the way the platforms “works”. Lastly, even though she is exposing the campaign to the majority of the population by conducting it in Hebrew, she is aware to the large minorities she is not reaching. Therefore, she has been planning to translate the quotes into Arabic, Russian, and even English for further exposure with volunteers’ help.

As part of the campaign level, a special group includes men from the general public, who are being included not due to specific special efforts, but due to the way the campaign is conducted: (1) her choice in mediated communication on Facebook for the campaign, a platform that is popular among both women and men (Mann & Lev-On, 2016) and is easily accessible, rather than physical presence (2) her lack of framing the campaign as a feminist/women’s issue that targets women, but rather as a human-rights one that concerns society at large. This can be seen in the two sole messages attached to the projects’ names—“what they say when they pay for prostitution” and “what we have to say about them”—and the question referred to all the readers in the male-project—“what do we think about their choice”, all of which connected to the projects’ names. Each project also has a symbol directly connected to its name used to frame the quotes and the testimonies—the campaign’s main content/tools: each quote is displayed on a similar symbolic image of a price-tag that emphasises the act of purchasing sex services and the commodification of the women from the perspective of the male consumers. Each testimony is displayed on a symbolic image of a male face-portrait that emphasises the responsibility of the consumers who play a central role in the industry since the perspective of the women (their gaze) relates to the consumers’ behaviour and attitudes toward them (3) the campaign’s exposure in other media platforms and its longevity are meant to increase the campaign’s
exposure and, thus, followers and comments in general and male ones in particular, which indeed leads to a gradual increase. This is despite the gendered offline discourse that is reflected in the campaign: there are generally more women followers and comments, and many of their comments are angry/violent as a result of the shock/disgust from the quotes. The activist is aware of and knows that it deters not only some men but also some women from commenting, a situation that only long-term efforts change.

On the discussion level, the activist makes special efforts to include certain consumers and pro-legalisation advocates who do not engage in the Pages’ discussions. This includes private dialogues with those who often send angry private messages to the Pages’, inviting them to follow the campaign and participate in the discussions.

Thereby, unlike campaigns that use story-telling (Gong, 2015; O’Brien, 2013; Stiles, 2012; Yick & Shapira, 2010), the content she posts does not include imagery nor videos that focus on the women and manipulate their stories to fit a campaign’s agenda of a rescue-and-victim narrative (Bergquist, 2015), not even for planting hope (Gong, 2015). Instead, the campaign is based on non-manipulated first-person narratives that reveal diverse information about the industry and expose its complexities and nuances. These complexities are reinforced in the texts shared about the industry, such as news articles, videos; artistic, cultural, and academic productions; campaigns, etc. that expose additional information about it from different perspectives instead of merely one that abolitionist (negative) (Andrijasevic & Anderson, 2009; Gould, 2010; Hoyle, Bosworth & Dempsey, 2011; O’Brien, 2013, 2016; Weitzer, 2007) and liberal (positive) (Feldman, 2014; Majic, 2014b) campaigns show. Moreover, these complexities reveal the entire Israeli prostitution industry, both domestic and transnational, unlike abolitionist efforts that focus on the latter and ignore the former (O’Brien, 2016; Ray, 2006). Lastly, instead of only alluding to the male consumers through the women’s stories or use explicit declarations to fight the demand (Choi-Fitzpatrick, 2016; Gould, 2010; O’Brien, 2016; Weitzer, 2007) that even target the consumers (Majic, 2017b), the activist shifts the focus to the consumers’ role in the industry by using their own authentic language, as the male-quotes function as the primary tool in the campaign:

My intention with the [male-Project] is clear and decisive—I have no interest in discussing the philosophical, academic claims of ‘free of choice’, ‘freedom of occupation’, ‘freedom of the individual’, etc., which are always attached to the prostitution debate. It’s a largely irrelevant discussion because the parties approach it with prejudices and social paradigms that are light-years away from the flesh-and-bones that constitute prostitution itself. I want to focus on the one thing that is often being ignored—the consumers’ choice;
to place the question mark on their shoulders, and not on the women’s who usually carry
this weight, and ask them, the ones who pay, why do you choose to do this. And this is a
question that I refer to the public through the quotes—what do you think about what they
are doing, of what is happening in the prostitution world in practice …[Thereby, the male-
project] provides a discourse that is not above the head of the sex-industry, but the
consumers’ direct discourse—this is how prostitution sounds and looks like, and this is
the way they talk about and treat prostituted women…If we want to understand the
prostitution phenomenon and formulate an opinion about it, there has to be a junction
where we stop and read how prostitution consumption sounds.

Therefore, her tactics can be seen as a new kind of story-telling used to create a complicated
and a deeper discourse. They can, thus, be seen as mended creative informational persuasion
tactics that PC often requires (Waisbord, 2014).

Even though the activist is aware of the shock-effect and the moral outrage the male-quotes
especially create by being replaced from their original context (the forums) to a “clean and
neutral one” (the campaign), she believes these are necessary reactions to change people’s
perceptions that are deeply rooted in romantic notions to those of disgust and to inspire people
to act. However, unlike campaigns that produce solely those reactions (O’Brien, 2013; Yick &
Shapira, 2010), she does not believe that a constant shock is effective, and therefore, she has
been consciously balancing it with additional texts, less violent hand-picked quotes, and pauses
between their publications. This is a similar thinking to other social media-based campaigns
that consciously avoid exaggerated statistics that many one-way communications-based
campaign do (Gould, 2010; Schloenhardt et al., 2012; Weitzer, 2007) because similarly to the
activist, they claim to attract the same reactions (Gong, 2015) and avoid misleading the public
with unreliable data. The more balanced quotes are also used to reveal more details and nuances
about the industry the consumers provide, such as information about themselves, the violence’
banality, and consumers’ dissociation between what they see and what they do. Additional texts
also aid in retaining the Pages’ dynamics and the participants’ interest, a similar tactic
campaigns that use social media use through updates (Gong, 2015).

All the content she shares is also often not self-evident information about the industry to make
people think, understand the meaning of the texts by themselves, and form their own opinions
rather than imposing hers through dissemination of reduced narratives used by many one-way
communication-based campaigns (Gould, 2010; Majic, 2017b; O’Brien, 2013, 2016) and even
online-based video campaigns (Majic, 2017a; Steele & Shores, 2014, 2015; Yick & Shapira,
2010). Even when she shares more “evident” content and that people may have seen/read
elsewhere, her intention is providing people a different perspective by placing it in a different
context as part of the campaign that shows the content in a different light. In this way, she provides people a space to share concerns/information/opinions/experiences, identify problems, and find their potential solutions (Waisbord, 2014). Thereby, the activist can be seen as the catalyst whose role transforms from a transmitter who disseminates specific ideas that prescribe solutions to pre-defined problems to that of a facilitator/mediator, and even conflict negotiator, who “poses problems” through “thought-provoking questions” elicited from people’s existing knowledge (Cadiz, 2005; Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009). This is strengthened by the campaign’s framing in which there is no prescribed ideas/solutions but rather a situation that relates directly to the campaign’s main content that poses a problem together with the question she advances.

These tactics also show that the activist is conscious to the power-relations present in any human relations (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009) that emphasise the equality between the catalyst and all the stakeholders because she is shifting the power of thinking and deciding to the participants, and they are seen as equal partners (Cadiz, 2005). This also shows that she sees this communication as a process of interaction, meaning making, and education (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009) and, therefore, as horizontal and democratic—the dialogue is open to and includes diverse ideas (Waisbord, 2014). This interaction and meaning making with stakeholders are similar to campaigns that utilise irony in internet-based video-clips by loosening control over people’s reactions and allow them instead to think critically about content that heavily relies on their interpretations and knowledge and assumptions about the issue, which is pertinent in digital tools “where the context is less easily managed than in traditional media.” (Arthurs, 2012, p. 484).

The consciousness to the power-relations is also most apparent with two specific groups: the male-consumers and the women. Regarding the consumers, who are the campaign’s focus and whose perceptions are the hardest to change, this is apparent in two tactics: first, by publishing the quotes anonymously without even the pseudonyms they use in the forums. She could have published those along the rest of the details she provides to each quote about their source that include the name of the forums and the date and exact time they were published in addition to trigger warnings about the violent language they contain, which adds to the activist’s and dialogue’s transparency. By avoiding that, she avoids what could have been interpreted as online shaming (Sundén & Paasonen, 2018) that can be seen by many as tempting not only because of the violence in their language towards the women that I can personally testify is difficult to absorb with the reading of every new quote, but also because of the hate-speech (Gagliardone et al., 2015; Megarry, 2014) towards them and increasingly towards women and...
“feminists” who also include the activist, female journalists who started reporting about the forums, and politicians behind the new bill. Instead, the activist also conducts the private conversations with those who send her private messages mentioned before—the second tactic. Even though I personally do not believe in shaming, online or offline, I would argue that these tactics reveal the relatively high degree of faith and hope in people’s ability to change, humility, and commitment to the campaign—four of the values on which PC is based—through an active, non-judgmental listening (Cadiz, 2005; Waisbord, 2001) that are not only present towards the rest of the groups, but primarily with the consumers:

The [campaign] only sharpened my understanding that the line between those who consume prostitution and those who don’t is very thin in the respect that prostitution consumers are motivated by the same cultural codes that we are all exposed to…most people are conscious—for most of us it is important that we can be reconciled with our behavior in terms of moral cultural codes. If it had not been for this belief, I would have thought similarly to the last desperate man who maintain that prostitution have always existed and will continue to exist, that it is a cultural need and should be institutionalized. To me, these are cries that stem from despair and acceptance of the existing situation and from hopelessness and disbelief that it can be changed. So I choose to believe that people can change their habits and history. It happened in other humanistic issues, and it will also happen with prostitution.

Regarding the women, the marginalised voiceless group the change is meant for, the power-relations are also apparent in several tactics. First and similarly to the consumers, in addition to not manipulating the testimonies, they are also published anonymously and accompanied with similar trigger warnings about the violent language to show their authenticity. Additionally, the activist crosses off any details that may expose the women that are often mentioned in the male-quotes to protect the women. All of these not only add to the activist’s transparency, but they are also done out of genuine care for the women as a group she wishes to help—PC’s fifth value (Cadiz, 2005). This care is strengthened in her difficulty to reach out for women to collect more testimonies mentioned before, which also has consequences for the female-project of which the activist is aware, primarily its lower activity than the male one. This is also the basis for her commitment not only to the campaign but especially to them.

The second tactic can be seen in the activist’s patience with creating the female-project that is also based on care for them. The activist initially wanted to create this project alongside the male one as a parallel project for the women to share their experiences with the men, while ranking and comparing between them through detailed graphic descriptions similarly to the men. This was to show the men how the women they pay for feel about them because they
cannot do so in reality\textsuperscript{36}, and by that, place the men under scrutiny and fear of being recognised and shift the social disgrace to them. She had been hesitating for about a year about creating the project due to the emotional aspects towards the women mentioned before. During that year, however, she began receiving messages from individual women she knew who were exposed to the male-project to create a female one as an “answer” to the male one. When she realised that the need came from them, because for many it was a tool for relief and a will to voice themselves and participate in awareness efforts about the industry from within that outweighed the difficulty of sharing the testimonies, she created the campaign:

...I have learned how difficult it is for a prostituted woman, or even for a woman who was in prostitution up until a few years ago, to speak this language again. There is a desire—legitimate, natural, and understandable—to not go back there and move on with life. And when a woman is still in the industry, there is a natural tendency to normalize the situation rather than to focus on its filthy aspects. It's a basic human instinct....That said, the more I spoke to women I know who are in or out of the prostitution cycle, the more they initiated the need to share and talk and get things out. Whether it was sharing memories and difficult events that took place years ago, or it was sharing a present interaction with a difficult client—there was a desire to vent the feelings and let out anger...It was important for them to make their voices heard, and it was clear in their voices that it was urgent for them to share their experiences...When I realized that this was a need that came from them, I decided to create the campaign. And that was after a year of self-deliberation.

This reveals the dialogue between the women and the activist and the equal power-relations. Even though the female-project was not initiated as a result of a discussion, it was initiated through a free, open, two-way communication process through the messages women sent to the activist. In this dialogue, the women were given time and space to share their concerns and identify a problem and a solution, even if individually. Since the majority of the testimonies do not contain graphic descriptions of the consumers as the activist initially intended, and since she publishes all the testimonies unselectively, she can be seen as actively, non-judgmentally listening to the women, which led to mutual trust (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009). By that, the activist shifted the power to the women, which is especially important because they are the group the change is meant for (Cadiz, 2005). Thereby, the communication between them can be seen as a process of interaction and meaning making and as reciprocal collaboration (Servaes, 2003) because it is horizontal and democratic—it emerged from within the participants’ group rather than from outside, the activist (Cadiz, 2005).

\textsuperscript{36} Prostituted women do not tend to share their feelings with consumers out of survival: fear of losing money because consumers may not return that may also lead to physical violence by consumers/pimps/traffickers.
The women’s act of sharing their testimonies reveals the conscientization they have been reaching, PC’s communication goal (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009): taking risks to engage in an action to change their situation based on a deep understanding of it despite the difficulties it inherits for many of them (Cadiz, 2005). The project can then be seen as providing empowerment for the women—the highest form of participation (Arnstein, 1969; Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009)—that originates from a sense of community/ownership and can be seen in their ability to communicate their own stories (Wilkins, 2015). Moreover, the reason the activist is the one who conducts the campaign instead of the women is the women’s own will that is grounded in fear of exposure out of shame, which is also the reason for the entire campaign to begin with—to start a process of long-term change that will eventually lead to the women’s voices’ legitimacy so they could run the struggle themselves:

In all my conversations in recent years with prostituted women,...women from the entire spectrum of attitudes regarding legislation and prostitution in general….they all share the characteristic of shame and a maddening fear from exposure. Any type of exposure. Even an anonymous testimony on Facebook makes the women feel as a stinging mark of Cain, or a stigmata….Few prostituted women in Israel or in the world identify themselves in their real name, whether in a literary text, in a debate article, or physically. And the implications of this exposure, if it occurs, are unbearable burden for the women….In my eyes, there is a limit to the extent to which social organizations are the sole, or at least the primary, reflection of the prostituted population in the media, without detracting from their importance—on the contrary. A woman who survived a very difficult street-prostitution told me once, when I shared with her my inner conflict about the representation and the authentic voices of the women, you are my voice—what you do is my way of speaking and making my and other women’s voices heard...My dream is that, gradually, with exposure to the discourse, the public will realise that the true power lies in prostituted women and in those who escaped it and that they are the ones who can really lead the struggle. But in the meantime, their voice is not getting the legitimacy it deserves because the public makes it superficial. Traditionally and globally, our society wants the presence of prostituted women, but it is also ashamed of them and excludes them: A prostitute—whore—is the most common curse, then a son of a bitch, and being a slut is a sign of shame. Once we admit we are a chauvinist culture and stop using a woman’s sexuality against her, only then can we really give a proper place to prostituted women’s voices...

This and the rest of the tactics in the campaign reveal that the activist is using multiple communication channels and mediums (Waisbord, 2014) that are determined according to the way they stimulate dialogic communication with all the stakeholders, including the group the change is designed for (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009). These mediums vary from interpersonal, mass and alternative media, and mediated communication that include two/many-to-many communication. Similarly to the blog’s campaign (Feldman, 2014), for example, the activist
also utilises the internet’s virtual anonymity for the women’s participation without exposing themselves. However, unlike the blog, by using Facebook and making efforts to expose the campaign wider, she is providing the women a platform to also participate in a public debate, which is especially important with marginalised groups’ “visibility and voice in the mediated public sphere” (Tufté & Mefalopulos, 2009, p. 21). By utilising diverse communication forms, the main change is seen on the socio-structural level because it is based on people’s norms and perceptions, first and foremost, rather than on individual ones. This is apparent with the consumers’ that in many campaigns the demand is seen solely individually-based (Choi-Fitzpatrick, 2016; Gould, 2010; Majic, 2017b; O’Brien, 2013, 2016; Weitzer, 2007). This reveals the activist’s understanding that the prostitution phenomenon involves multiple causes that require multiple solutions on all levels—individual, community, and social/structural (Waisbord, 2014)—and from the campaign’s goals, strategy, and tactics, all focused on creating a change on the socio-structural level. It is also apparent in her understanding of the campaign as a part of the local Israeli prostitution discourse that includes assisting women, promoting the new inclusive legislation, and taking preventive measures of which fighting the demand is only one part.

However, even though the activist set a general goal, a strategy, and tactics to achieve those, she is still practicing a constant process of learning—the reflective part of PC’s praxis foundation—by critically reflecting over and constantly learning from her actions/experiences, as well as from others (Cadiz, 2005; Wilkins, 2015). A small example would be her critical reflections over some of the emotional, more impulsive, comments she posted in the past in the discussions as a result of consumers’ and trolls’ provoking comments, which she stopped after reflecting about it, because it clashed with her goal of providing space for natural, constructive conversations. Thereby, her goals and tactics are not fixed, but rather flexible and adaptable to unexpected circumstances and strategic junctures (Waisbord, 2014), which makes the campaign circular and open-ended (Tufté & Mefalopulos, 2009). One such significant example can be seen in “the Facebook incident”. During several weeks in the summer of 2016, due to an anonymous user’s report, the male-Page was censored several times by Facebook: some quotes were erased and both the activist’s personal and the male-Page accounts were blocked for several days on the grounds that some of the content she shares is “violating Facebook’s community standards”, which was directed at the male-quotes. Instead of considering it as an obstacle and stop publishing the quotes or even moving to another platform, the activist saw it as an opportunity. She contacted journalists from the diverse platforms she has come to known
during her years in the field to expose the incident in the media and receive an answer from Facebook, as she could not receive one on her own (it is known that Facebook rarely changes censorship decisions). This led to numerous articles about the incident in diverse media platforms, some of which are also a part of the data for this thesis, and resulted with three major outcomes: the network apologised to the activist, resumed both accounts’ activities, and the male-Page, ironically, received media exposure that increased the number of the male-Page’s followers—3,000 in several weeks. However, the activist was also warned that the male-Page would be deleted unless her educational purposes were made clearer on the Pages. Even though it clashes with one of her major tactics, namely, publishing content that is not obvious, she decided to adapt her tactics to the platform she is using by adding disclaimers below the trigger warnings under each quote that waive compliance with the male-quotes and explain that their use is merely educational.

Even though the tactics she used solved the problem with Facebook because the Page was never blocked again, Facebook created a paradox that potentially threatens PC’s last important principle—the campaign’s sustainability (Waisbord, 2014). While Facebook offers a space for social causes, it does not welcome content that is not “pleasing to the eye”, which social causes that focus on “sensitive” issues often use, because it strives to be accessible to everyone. Additionally, Facebook, as a commercial closed propriety platform, changed one of its ToS, in which private social connections are given priority over social causes. They are also based on closed algorithms on which decisions are made, which has worsen because of the popularity they are receiving and, thus, monopoly status they are reaching (Meikle, 2016; van der Graaf, 2015) that led to unchangeable censorship decisions. Without the activist’ quick reaction and familiarity with journalists, the implications this incident could have had on the campaign would have included much more damage. However, had the activist decided to move the campaign to a FLOSS one, for example, or even a less popular commercial one like Twitter, the exposure it attracted would have been significantly lower. Therefore, even if Facebook is seen only as a tool (Waisbord, 2001), there is no equivalent popular platform with the affordances it provides. That said, it is using PC’s principles, specifically flexibility, creativity, and the campaign being based on the activist’s local knowledge (context-specific) (Waisbord, 2001) that helped the activist solve the problem.

The last potential threat to the campaign’s sustainability lies in the activist being the sole person conducting the campaign instead of sharing it with more people. Individually running the campaign may be beneficial when it pertains avoiding compromising one’s visions and tactics
and accounting for one’s actions. It may be less beneficial, though, regarding the work- and emotional-load sharing. Even though the activist has been investing extreme amounts of time in the campaign, exemplifying incredible patience that shows her extraordinary commitment to it, the emotional toll it takes led to her eventual pause from it for several months during 2017, which is also one of her main tactics to conduct a long-term campaign. This could have potentially harmed people’s trust and, therefore, engagement in the campaign; for example, it could have harmed not only the users’ trust but also the people the change is meant for—the women’s. That said, it was the only pause she took throughout four years of campaigning, after which, the engagement in both projects continued just as before: people continued to engage in the Pages, and the women continued to send her testimonies. It can, thus, be postulated that the activist succeeded in building such a strong trust that allowed for a pause. Moreover, avoiding compromising her vision and tactics that have been exemplified to be grounded on PC’s principles is paradoxically what led her to conduct the campaign by herself as she could not find any group/individual who share these, which also reflects the faith and commitment she has towards these.

8 Conclusions

In this section, I answer first the research questions by summarising the main findings of the analysis, then provide the study’s contributions and limitations, and finally propose suggestions for future research.

7.1 Answering the research questions

The focus of this thesis is on the potential of social media platforms, namely Facebook, as a tool to enable participation in Israeli human rights awareness campaigns. This was explored through a case study of the WHP/M on-going, digitally-based campaign, primarily on Facebook, that raises awareness about the Israeli prostitution industry in a human rights context. The research questions that guided this study were the following:

1. What is the potential of social media platforms, primarily Facebook, as a tool to enable participation in the When He Pays/Me campaign?

1.2 In how far are the principles of participatory communication reflected in the campaigns’ tactics?

The analysis revealed that in the WHP/M campaign, there has been an innovative use of tactics to raise awareness about the Israeli prostitution industry through the extensive use of PC’s
principles based on two-way communication in the form of free, open, transparent, inclusive dialogues with various groups of people, creativity, flexibility, learning, reflexivity, and critical thinking. Dialogues take place on Facebook’s various spaces, but Facebook is used alongside additional communication mediums and channels to begin a wider public discussion. Additionally, a new kind of story-telling that reveals the complexities and nuances of the industry was used: the uncensored male-quotes in the male-Facebook Page (WHP), the various non-manipulated women’s testimonies in the second one (WHPM), and diverse material about and by the people in the industry.

Thus, through the WHP/M campaign, it was revealed that the potential of social media platforms, primarily Facebook, as a tool to enable participation in the campaign lies in the combination of Facebook’s popularity among the Israeli population and its unique combination of affordances in the form of cause-Pages that provide special spaces for social campaigns to share complex content (i.e. messages) to a large number of people, cost-free, through a friendly interface that allows people to converse publicly (Pages’ Walls) and privately with admins (Page’s private messages). Additionally, the anonymity virtual space generally provides allows marginalised groups to participate in these efforts without exposing themselves and, thus, their empowerment. However, it was also revealed that this potential can be fulfilled only if PC’s principles are applied, which requires strong understanding and commitment to.

The growing increase in the use of dialogic communication between activists and the wider public among social media-based awareness campaigns and the current campaign reveal one of the highest potentials of social media platforms, especially Facebook, for social campaigns: access to conversation, as Shirky (2011) strongly argues, where people can ask questions and share knowledge (Dean, 2004). This is because it is where more people nowadays articulate problems and debate opinions (Shirky, 2011), an essential step when forming political opinions after being exposed to information (Katz & Lazarsfeld’s, 1955). The general virtual space’s anonymity can strengthen this even more by allowing more marginalised groups to voice themselves in this growing mediated public sphere and, thus, participate in public debate (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009), especially those who fear exposure, which is common in human rights campaigns.

However, if the information provided in campaigns only reduces complex social issues, the spaces provided to converse it decrease exponentially, as the content does not allow a meaningful engagement like reflection and critical thinking. This was seen in the use of many social media-based campaigns that used them for conversation with users but not for complex
messaging (Gong, 2015). In contrast, sex-workers who used a mass media campaign used messages creatively to portray sex-workers in a new light despite its sole focus on positive images and slogans (Majic, 2014b). Thereby, I would argue that it is not merely access to conversation and not just information, as Shirky (2011) argues, that is the potential of social media for participation, especially not in human rights awareness campaigns that tend to surround complex issues; rather, it is the space for complex information, combined with platforms’ popularity in a certain setting, affordances, and use of PC’s principles.

PC’s principles’ use is detrimental because it is their use that helped the activist overcome Facebook’s characteristics as a closed propriety platform based on closed algorithms and changing ToS (Meikle, 2016; van der Graaf, 2015) that threatened to damage the campaign. They also made her use a new kind of story-telling that reveals the industry’s complexities instead of reducing it that provided the women, among others, space to participate and, by that, bridge the divide the internet has led to (Hilbert, 2011; Yu, 2006) and overcome the internet’s noisy climate (Moe, 2010) that is especially important in awareness-raising efforts (Petray, 2011). Additionally, they were the reason for her will in inspiring people for high-threshold meaningful actions rather than low-threshold clicktivist ones (Gladwell, 2010; Van Laer, 2010; Van Laer & Van Aelst, 2010). Furthermore, they were the reason for her will to create inclusive discussions that expand those conducted by already politically active ones (Norris, 2001) to avoid existing participation patterns, polarisation, and prejudice. Lastly, they were the reason for her use of multiple communication mediums and channels in which Facebook is used not as the sole tool but alongside other communication mediums/channels to create a wider discourse, which is essential in social campaigns (Castells, 2009; Erkul & Kes-Erkul, 2009; Metzgar & Maruggi, 2009).

7.2 Contributions

This study contributes to the growing research that explores the way social media are used by activists to strategically promote social change, which is significant in our “information-saturated society” (Castells, 2011) in which social media have provided spaces for more strategic (Waisbord, 2014) bottom-up creative initiatives that should constantly be explored to learn from (Hemer & Tufte, 2012). Particularly, this study adds to research about locally-based initiatives and widens the scarce research on awareness raising efforts through participation, which is especially important in ComDev research in which participation is a key concept and awareness efforts are understudied. Lastly, it contributes to the non-existent/unpublished
research on Israeli human rights awareness campaigns, particularly about the Israeli prostitution industry.

### 7.3 Limitations and future research

The first limitation concerns time and geographical ones that have played a role in the choice of the media texts; analogue texts from print media, for example, could have enriched the analysis even more and contributed to the investigation’s validity. Moreover, there may even be more digital sources about the campaign that I may have missed. Thereby, further research can include these tools that can discover more information and enrich the analysis.

Moreover, since I discovered some of the activist’s tactics by following the campaign, additional tactics than those discussed in the thesis may have been used. Therefore, future research can focus on the content of both projects’ Pages, both the activist’s content and participants’ comments, to explore her tactics further and understand their effectiveness. This will provide new insights about tactics that can be used in Israeli human rights’ awareness campaigns.

Lastly, following participatory research and evaluation, interviews with various stakeholders, primarily the women, which time restrictions did not allow, could have enriched the analysis by sharing the perspectives on their part in the campaign. Therefore, future research can include interviews with some of the women who shared their testimonies. These can be accompanied by interviews with additional stakeholders, such as participants in the projects’ Pages, active/potential consumers who communicated with the activist, etc. that can deepen a participatory-based study. Following this line of inquiry, these can also aid in research about the potential impact the campaign has had thus far, which would then be a kind of an intermediate evaluation (Lennie & Tacchi, 2013). This could be supplemented by interviews with people/activists who started initiatives inspired by the campaign or journalists inspired by the campaign to examine whether the campaign has aided in the way they report about prostitution, as there has been an increased media attention on the consumers role on the industry since 2015 (The Open University, 2018), only a year after the first project was initiated.
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Appendix

A list of links of all the online media texts used in the thesis

Media texts that were used for both context and analysis (i.e. contain interviews with the campaign’s creator):

1. http://www.onlife.co.il/%D7%A2%D7%91%D7%95%D7%93%D7%94/%D7%97%D7%91%D7%A8%D7%94/83349/%D7%96%D7%A0%D7%95%D7%AA-%D7%9E%D7%91%D7%A4%D7%A0%D7%99%D7%9D
2. http://tech.walla.co.il/item/2789876
3. http://timeout.co.il/%D7%90%D7%99%D7%9A0%D7%98%D7%A8%D7%A0%D7%98-%D7%95%D7%9B%D7%A0%D7%95%D7%9C-%D7%A9%D7%97%D7%95%D7%A9%D7%A3-%D7%90%D7%AA-%D7%A6%D7%93%D7%94-%D7%94%D7%90%D7%A4%D7%9C-%D7%A9%D7%9C-%D7%AA%D7%A2%D7%A9%D7%99%D7%99%D7%AA-%D7%94%D7%9E%D7%99%D7%9F
5. http://www.haaretz.co.il/blogs/veredlee/1.2794246
7. http://www.mako.co.il/women/Article-6e8285dc694a151006.htm
11. https://archive.is/COS26
14. http://atmag.co.il/home-page/%D7%90%D7%AA-%D7%91%D7%99%D7%92%D7%A0%D7%93%D7%94/%D7%9E%D7%A1%D7%99%D7%91%D7%94-%D7%95%D7%9B%D7%A8%D7%90%D7%9C%D7%99%D7%AA-%D7%93%D7%A4%D7%99-%D7%97%D7%95%D7%91%D7%94-%D7%A4%D7%9E%D7%99%D7%A0%D7%A1%D7%98%D7%99%D7%99%D7%9D-%D7%91%D7%9A%D7%8D7%A9%7D%AA
15. http://www.haokets.org/2016/11/29/%D7%94%D7%A9%D7%90%D7%9C%D7%95-%D7%9F-%D7%A9%D7%9C-%D7%94%D7%9A2%D7%95%D7%A7%D7%A5-%D7%98%D7%9C%D7%99-%D7%A7%D7%95%D7%A8%D7%9C
16. http://semek.podbean.com/e/%D7%A1%D7%A2%D7%9E%D7%A7-48-%D7%98%D7%9C%D7%99-%D7%A7%D7%95%D7%A8%D7%9C-
Media texts that were used for context only (i.e. do not include interviews with the campaign’s creator):

20. https://mekomit.co.il/%D7%90%D7%99%D7%A9%D7%99%D7%A0%D7%99%D7%93%D7%AA-%D7%91%D7%99%D7%97%D7%95%D7%95%D7%96%D7%A0/
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