



Original Article

## TRANSFORMATION IDENTITY THROUGH DIGITAL COMMUNICATION IN MOHSIN HAMID'S EXIT WEST

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### ABSTRACT

In Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*, technology plays a vital role in shaping identity and relationships. The story follows Saeed and Nadia, young lovers living in a city affected by war. To stay in touch and for survival, they depend on both digital communication tool and magical technologies like cell phones and The Magical Doors. These Magical Doors are a metaphorical symbol of technology, which acts as a portal and helps Saeed and Nadia to break physical barriers and enables travel to different parts of the world. While technology makes them connect with each other, it also brings the feeling of isolation and disconnection from reality. The present paper explores the impact of technology on identity, relationships and sense of belonging to the new environment. The dual nature of technology brings new opportunities and challenges. This paper aims to show that while technology helps Saeed and Nadia stay in touch and escape, it also makes them feel isolated and disconnected from reality. Saeed and Nadia's journey shows technology impacts human experiences, especially in a migration and globalized world. The research paper provides a deeper understanding of how technology shapes identity and belonging in a rapidly evolving world.

**Keywords:** Magical Doors, Digital Pathways, Technology, Identity and Belonging

### INTRODUCTION

Mohsin Hamid, a Pakistani novelist, was born in Lahore on July 23, 1971. He grows in the United States where his father is a professor at Stafford University. Hamid later returns to Lahore with his family and enrolled in an American School in Pakistan. At the age of eighteen, he goes back to United State to complete his studies. After graduating from the Princeton University in 1993, he returns to Pakistan and began his carrier as a writer. His first novel *Moth Smoke* is published in 2000 and *Exist West* which is published in 2017.

*Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid is a story about Saeed and Nadia, a young lover living in a city affected by war. As the violence grows, they find Magical Doors through an agent that acts as portals, taking them to different countries. They use these doors to escape to places like Greece, England and the United States. As they travel, they face struggle in new lands, facing the challenges of displacement and dealing with the changes in their relationship. The novel explores the experiences of refugees and the search for safety, love, and belonging in a divided world.

According to [Papacharissi and Easton \(2013\)](#), "social media helps people connect beyond their local communities, breaking traditional barriers of communication". One important benefit of social media is social capital, which refers to the value gained from

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online relationships and peer recognition. As seen in James' case study, people increase their social status through likes and followers. Similarly, in Exit West, Mohsin Hamid shows that digital communication helps migrants stay connected despite being physically displaced. Nadia and Saeed rely on video calls and messages to maintain their relationship, highlighting how technology sustains connections in a globalized world.

## OBJECTIVES

- 1) To examine the role of technology in shaping Saeed and Nadia's identity in Exit West.
- 2) To analyze the "Magical Doors" as metaphorical symbols of Modern digital communication tools
- 3) To analyze digital communication shapes Saeed and Nadia's sense of belonging to the new environment, as well as the opportunities and challenges they face in Exit West

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In Exploring Global Identities in Mohsin Hamid's Exit West, Nawaf Mohammed K. Almutairi explores that globalization shapes identity in the novel. Hamid uses Magical Doors as a metaphor for modern technology and digital communication, making migration feel almost instant. Almutairi discusses that portrays the struggles of displacement, the search for belonging, and the way identities evolve in a constantly shifting world. He argues that Hamid presents migration as a shared human experience, showing how people adapt to new places while carrying the weight of their past. The study also connects the novel to real-world migration challenges; borders both physical and digital affect personal and cultural identity.

[Singh et al. \(2023\)](#) article in the article titled "Literary, Technocracy and Digitalization in Mohsin Hamid's Exit West". They explain a space that goes beyond traditional cultural boundaries, where cultures blend and interact without opposition. The authors argue that Hamid's depiction of migration and the refugee experience in the novel idea of transpace, showing how different cultures are interconnected, especially in times of displacement. They focus on how the characters in Exit West move through and adapt to various cultural spaces, which reflects the complex struggles of identity and belonging in a globalized world. This article helps readers to understand the novel explores the transformative impact of migration and the merging of cultures.

The study explores technologies like Digital communication and the Magical Doors shapes Saeed and Nadia's identities. These technologies bring both new opportunities and challenges as they adapt to new environments.

## TECHNOLOGY

This study adopts a combined theoretical approach; technology shapes identity and relationships in Exit West. Amin Maalouf's idea of multiple affiliations explains that identity is not fixed but shaped by different factors like culture and experiences, which evolve over time. This analyze Saeed's and Nadia's identities change as they move through various countries. Anthony Elliot and John Urry's concept of mobile lives shows how technology, like "The Magical Doors" in the novel, connects people across distances but also creates feelings of isolation. These theories explain the novel portrays technology as both a tool for connection and a challenge to building true belonging.

## TECHNOLOGY AND IDENTITY

In Exit West, Technology plays an important role in shaping the identities of Saeed and Nadia, a young lover living in an unnamed city affected by war. During the war normal meeting makes them difficult so they both depend on the Digital communication like Cell phone and internet to call, texting and messaging each other. They spend long nights talking through cell phone to bridge the physical and emotional distance between them. "Mostly they communicated by phone, message (51)". However, when the connection is lost they feel isolated "without their mobile phone and the access to the internet there was no ready way for them to re- establish contact" (57). This show Saeed and Nadia depend on technology, as loss communication leaves them feeling disconnected and uncertain. Even as they move to new countries, they use their phones to stay connected with family and friend, technology helps in shaping their identity.

Beyond digital communication, the Magical Door in Exit West is another form of technology, a metaphorical symbol of modern technology that helps Saeed and Nadia travel to the different places in the world. The Magical Doors allow them to escape the dangers of the war and explore new opportunities, much like the internet helps people to explore new things and connect with others. The doors represent the transformative power of technology, travel, and adapting to the new environment in the fast changing world. Hamid Says, "The doors were not only a means of escape but also a way of finding new places, new opportunities, and new selves" (Exit West, 82). This shows the doors like technology help to travel and adapt to the new place and the change in their identity.

Technology, both Digital communication and "The Magical Doors", plays a significant role in shaping Saeed and Nadia's identities. It helps them to stay connected, travel across borders, and explore new places. However, it also challenges them to adapt to ever changing environments. Technology serves as both a tool for survival and shaping Saeed and Nadia's identity.

## AN ESCAPE THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

In *Exit West*, Mohsin Hamid introduces "The Magical Doors" that allows Saeed and Nadia to move instantly from one country to another without any physical barriers. These Doors are not the magical element, it is the metaphorical symbol of modern digital communication, which helps the people to connect across the world, no matter how far they are. The modern communication like a phone call or video call can bring people together across distances; the magical doors allow Saeed and Nadia to escape the city affected with war. However, while these doors make travel effortless, technology connects, but it cannot provide the true sense of belonging.

As violence grows in the city, Saeed and Nadia decide to leave the city. They come to know about the "Magical Doors" through an agent, who tells them that these doors are everywhere and can lead to different parts of the world. The agent demands money from them to travel; Saeed and Nadia make their down payment and make a booking. Hamid describes this moment: "There was a small sound at a distance, and she and Saeed realized the agent might not be alone. Saeed asked where the door was and where it led to, and the agent replied that the doors were everywhere ... they were making a down payment" (*Exit West*, 84). The doors, like digital technology, offer an escape but come with uncertainty. When Saeed and Nadia finally enter the door, they see nothing but darkness. Hamid writes, "The door, and drawing close, she was struck by its darkness, its opacity, the way that it did not reveal what was on the other side, and so felt equally like a beginning and an end." (*Exit West*, 98). Saeed and Nadia stepping into the digital world. This shows Saeed and Nadia's journey stepping into the digital world, where new opportunities can be both thrilling and uncertain.

Saeed and Nadia use the magical doors to escape the violence in the city and travel to new places. Saeed and Nadia use "The magical Door" digital technology to find new opportunities. Their first door takes them to Greek island of Mykonos, "They learned that they were on the Greek Island of Mykonos..." (*Exit West*, 100), they hope for a fresh start. However, being in a new place doesn't make it comfortable and nor feel safe. Later, they move through another door to London, a city full of other migrants. They landed in the room with television Hamid says, "They passed through the door and clicked on the television to see if they could

discover where they were, and it was soon clear to them they were in London" (*Exit West*, 119). In London, Saeed and Nadia struggle to fit in, both connected and isolated at the same time.

Eventually, they travel through another door to San Francisco. By this point, their relationship begins to change. Technology helps people stay connected across distances, but it can also create emotional distance. Saeed and Nadia to keep moving, but movement does not always mean closeness, people may stay connected through technology but still feel lonely or disconnected from each other. In the end, the magical doors in *Exit West* symbolize digital communication shapes identity, migration, and human connection.

## OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF TECHNOLOGY

Hamid Explores digital communication influences the lives of Saeed and Nadia as they move from one place to another in the novel. Throughout the novel, technologies like cell phones and the magical doors help Saeed and Nadia stay connected and find new opportunities and challenges in unfamiliar places. Saeed and Nadia both struggle with belonging, often feeling caught between their past and their new surroundings. They leave their war through the Magical Doors, symbolizing modern movement without physical barriers, using technology to get temporary relief. Saeed stays in touch with his father through phone calls and text messages; his attachment to the past, making it difficult for him to adapt to new places. On the other hand, Nadia enjoys her new freedom and opportunities, gradually detaching herself from her old life and focusing on the present.

Technology also creates challenges for Saeed and Nadia. It helps them to find new opportunities, but make them to feel outsiders. In London, migrants are often shown in a negative way on the internet and social media. This makes them feel unwelcome and different from the people around them. Hamid writes, "Westminster and Hammersmith legal residents were in a minority, and native-born ones vanishingly few, with local newspaper referring to the area as the worst of the black holes in the fabric of nation" (*Exit West*, 126).

The Magical Doors represent technology breaking down the barriers; Saeed and Nadia move quickly from one place to another. These doors give the new chance and freedom, but Saeed and Nadia face challenges to adjust to the new culture and way of life each time they move. Technology makes them escape the physical limitation of travel. Saeed and Nadia's use of phones and the magical doors shows technology can help people move to new places, but it also makes them question their identity and where they belong.

## CONCLUSION

In *Exit West*, Mohsin Hamid uses technology, especially through digital communication and the symbolic "Magical Doors," plays a big role in shaping Saeed and Nadia's identities. As they move from one place to another, technology helps them stay connected with loved ones, escape danger, and search for new opportunities. But it also creates challenges, making them question their identity and feeling isolated. The Magical Doors represent how technology can break down physical barriers, letting them travel easily, but they also bring uncertainty and a sense of emotional disconnection. Saeed's attachment to his past, through his phone calls and

messages with his father, contrasts with Nadia's willingness to focus on the present and embrace new freedoms. Their different reactions to technology reflect how migration affects people in unique ways. In the end, the novel shows that while technology can offer new chances and help people move forward, it also forces them to confront the complexities of identity, belonging, and change in a world that's constantly shifting.

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