

## Navigating in the Virtual Mind of the Web': the E-psychonauts' Profiling

L. Orsolini<sup>1</sup>, G. Papanti<sup>2</sup>, G. Francesconi<sup>1</sup>, F. Professor Schifano<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>United Hospital and Academic Department of Experimental and Clinical Medicine and School of Life and Medical Sciences, Università Politecnica delle Marche and University of Hertfordshire, Ancona and Hatfield Herts UK, Italy ; <sup>2</sup>School of Life and Medical Sciences, Medical School of Trieste and University of Hertfordshire, Trieste and Hatfield Herts UK, Italy ; <sup>3</sup>School of Life and Medical Sciences, University of Hertfordshire, Hatfield Herts, United Kingdom

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**Introduction.** In the online drug forum communities there are some 'educated and informed' users who can provide somehow reliable information on psychoactive compounds/combinations. These users, also called 'e-psychonauts', may possess levels of technical knowledge relating to a range of "novel psychoactive substances" (NPS). Our project aimed at identifying and describing what available in terms of the socio-demographic and psychological characteristics of e-psychonauts.

**Materials and methods.** An unobtrusive observational approach of a list of cyber drug communities (blogs, fora, Facebook® and Twitter® pages) was here carried out. The forum posts/threads were accurately reviewed, analysed and compared according to the presence of common clusters in order to obtain appropriate consistency/homogeneity levels. Data were collected in the time frame January- February 2014.

**Results.** Psychonauts typically considered themselves as '*psychedelic researchers*', new Shamans, '*philosophers*' or '*alchemists*'. They appeared here to be mainly young, males, unmarried, and Caucasians. They presented with good/excellent employment conditions and with a set of 'key skills', including: attention to the inner 'soul'; high standards of knowledge about drugs' pharmaceutical/chemical properties; high levels of both verbal fluency in reporting own drug experiences and of IT skills.

**Conclusions.** The e-psychonauts seemed to perceive themselves as *amateur chemists*, sampling and at times synthesizing a range of drugs to achieve the state of consciousness they find most pleasurable. There is the need to improve both the existing levels of professional knowledge on this novel generation of drug misusers and to design/develop novel prevention approaches, able to 'attract the attention' of the e-psychonauts.