Users and Gratification Theory Approach to Understand Why People Use Digital Media Mainly During Lockdown

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ABSTRACT

This article seeks to find the uses and gratification that consumers receive by using digital media during the lockdown when there is a situation of Covid. This article tries to provide a more comprehensive understanding of why consumers use digital media. Exploratory research was conducted. In-depth interviews were conducted with over 30 individuals who use social media or digital media during the lockdown. This study identified eight implications of uses and gratifications for using digital media. They are social interaction, seeking information, time-pass, entertainment, relaxation, expression of opinion, information sharing, and knowledge about others.

KEYWORDS

consumer-generated media, Digital media, exploratory study, gratification theory, in-depth interview, lockdown, qualitative research, social media, uses, use of social media

INTRODUCTION

Digital media plays a vsery important and crucial role, and it remains always an area of interest for marketing practitioners. Ninety percent of marketers use digital media to promote a range of goods and services, according to recent research. By 2024, it is anticipated that corporations would have spent approximately 26.3% of their budget on social media (Madan, 2021). It has been noted that most businesses and organizations are promoting their products and services on social media or digital media platforms during the epidemic (Liu, 2020). Therefore, it is critical to comprehend how to use social media in an acceptable way in order to maximize profits for a business or organization. Social media has expanded its reach and now serves as a vital component of peer review, online conversations, scientific information dissemination, continuing medical education, and many more during the current pandemic (Goel,2020).

The theory of uses and pleasure, which originated in the communication literature, is seen as crucial to comprehending and assessing the comprehension of social media marketing (Madan, 2021). According to the uses and gratification theory, people search for media that will satisfy their wants and provide them with the greatest level of satisfaction. Although this theory is applicable to social

media, it has received little attention in the literature on social media and marketing. For this reason, in order to aid in and provide an explanation for why consumers utilise digital media, researchers employ the uses and gratification theory in this work.

In this model, we can find that this theory plays a very important role for Audiences as followed by surveillance, identity, relationship, diversion, and media sought which requires need gratified and results in continued use.

This study shows how important the uses and gratification theory is for understanding the uses and gratification that consumers get from utilising digital media, as well as how to apply this theory to digital media.

We begin by providing a quick overview of the literature on digital media, usage, and satisfaction theory (Whiting *et al*, 2013). Following a description of the methodology, the research findings are presented, and finally, the study's implications and conclusion are drawn.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Global pandemics have increased in frequency in recent decades; SARS in 2003, H5N1 in 2006, and H1N1 in 2009, for example, all hindered economic growth and business operations (Chung, 2015).

The term "digital media" refers to "a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technical Foundation of web 2.0 (Prykhodko,2019), and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content" . Social media is made up of a variety of information sources that are developed, created, and shared by users to raise awareness of goods and services (Murugesan, 2007).

Massive data analysis and information dissemination about COVID-19 on Reddit, Gab, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter. Analysis of the topic's engagement and interest in COVID-19 was done, and each platform's users were given a unique evaluation of how the discourse has changed globally (Cinelli et al., 2020).

Because Uses and Gratification theory originated in a variety of communication-related literature, it is applicable to social media. According to Williams et al. (2012), social media is a platform that has allowed thousands of users to connect with one another. The uses and gratifications theory can be applied in the following very basic way: people will choose media among competitors that best satisfies their needs and provides them with their ultimate satisfaction (Lariscy et al, 2011).
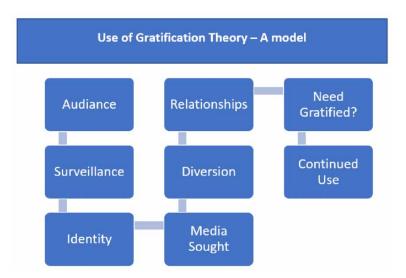
Figure 1. Author's own idea of model

It examined the impact of users' gratification and the type of social media on the effectiveness of different brand content strategies through a two-week experiment involving 60 SNS users and 61 microblog users (Gao, 2016).

Using pertinent data and examples, uses and gratifications, positive experiences, usage and activity counts, and social context are all covered in detail. The model backs up the main idea of the chapter, which is to combine concrete indicators of engagement—like usage and activity counts—with more abstract ones, like positive user experiences, in order to better understand why people use social media, how much they use it, what social media platforms they use, and the results of their use (McCay,2016).

This study investigates the pleasure niches of TikTok as a new social media app, drawing on niche theory and the uses and gratifications approach. We started by creating a list of reasons for utilizing Tik Tok to gauge user satisfaction. Next, we investigated the prediction power of these reasons for the competitive displacement potential of Tik Tok users who actively submit material both during the day and at night (Scherr, 2021).

By analyzing the above literature, we are able to develop a framework and scale on six themes:

1. Social interaction
2. Seeking information
3. Time-pass
4. Entertainment purpose
5. Relaxation
6. Usefulness

Explanation of the following themes is as follows:

1. **Social interaction:** This theme can be described as the use of social media for communication and interaction with others, which can include friends, family, and other relatives, depending on the uses and gratification literature (Prykhodko, 2019). This title originates from studies on the motivation for social interaction and the length of websites. Meeting people who share my interests and staying current with events are also part of it. Following review, the term "social interaction" was chosen because it was more inclusive than "companionship" but more limited than "interpersonal utility."
2. **Seeking Information:** (Korgaonkar, 1999) defines information motivation as the process through which users of social media platforms seek information and engage in self-education. The research paper's title also refers to the idea that people use social media for self-education and information seeking.
3. **Time-Pass:** Using social media to pass the time helps people avoid boredom. The study by Palmgreen and Rayburn (1979) on the benefits and purposes of watching television gave rise to this theme. The phrases "use the internet or social media when I have nothing better to do" and "it kills my time" are repeated frequently in different articles.
4. **Entertainment:** Entertainment is being provided through digital media. People used to spend time on social media during the Covid-19 pandemic, when the majority of people were infected and living in isolation. Through this medium, they were able to obtain information, amusement, and pleasure. Accordingly, interacting and browsing on Instagram reduces loneliness, but broadcasting—that is, posting content for public consumption—increases loneliness (Cauberghe, 2021). Additionally, it offers escapism, which is described as pleasurable, enjoyable, and fun by Wolin (1999).
5. **Relaxation:** When the pandemic was at its worst and everyone was anxious and stressed, social media helped people unwind. This is another aspect of social media that relieves daily stress (Korgaonkar, 1999). It also forced them to enter a stress-free, calming virtual environment.

6. **Usefulness:** A theme known as convenience for internet use was created by Papacharissi and Rubin (2000), and this type of social media is beneficial to people. Customers now have more ways than ever to interact socially online thanks to social media. Users create content and connect with one another through social media platforms like online communities (Hajli, 2014).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

An exploratory study was carried out because the uses and gratification theory and its connection to social media are not well covered in the literature. Thirty people were interviewed in-depth for this study (Dworkin, 2012). (Qualitative research methods typically use a smaller sample size than quantitative research methods. The reason for this is that qualitative research methodologies frequently aim to obtain a comprehensive comprehension of a phenomenon or concentrate on meaning (and its variations)—meaning that they frequently revolve around the how and why of a specific problem, procedure, circumstance, scene, subculture, or series of social interactions. In-depth interviewing tends to rely less on hypothesis testing and is less concerned with drawing conclusions that apply to a wider population of interest. As a result, grounded theory and in-depth interviews aim to "create categories from the data and then to analyse relationships between categories" (Charmaz, 1990, p. 1162) while also considering how the "lived experience" of research participants may be understood. between the ages of 18 and 50. Finding out how the theory and social media usage were received was the aim of the interview. The responders were asked a number of questions, such as what aspect of digital media they found most appealing and why they and their friends used it. A total of thirty individuals were interviewed. The gender distribution was 48% male and 52% female. falling between the ages of 20 and 40. Responses ranged from 200 to more than 1100 words.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert that a research study's credibility is crucial in determining its value, and their guidelines were applied to the qualitative analysis of the comments. Being trustworthy entails proving:

- **Credibility** -indicating that the findings are applicable in different contexts
- **Transferability** - having faith in the "truth" of the findings
- **Dependability** - demonstrating that the results are reliable and repeatable
- **Confirmability** - the level of objectivity, or how much the participants in a study influence the results rather than the motivation, bias, or interest of the researcher.

Using information from Nachrin, T. (2020), Palmgreen and Rayburn (1979), Korgaonkar and Wolin (1999), Papacharissi and Rubin (2000), Ko et al (2005), Ray, A., Dhir, A., Bala, P. K., & Kaur, P. (2019), the researcher first compiles a list of uses and satisfaction. Subsequently, the researcher read and evaluated the responses on their own, classifying the comments into groups. For academics and professionals in marketing, social media is an essential field of study. Recent research indicates that 88% of marketers use social media, and they spend over $60 billion annually on social media advertising (Gil-Or, 2010; Smith, 2011). Despite social media's enormous importance, little is known about how and why consumers use it. Uses and gratifications theory, which can be vital in developing more precise scales and measuring instruments for social media marketers, originates from the communications literature. According to the uses and gratifications theory (Lariscy, Tinkham, & Sweetser, 2011), people look for media that satisfies their needs and provides them with the greatest level of satisfaction.

The uses and gratifications theory is particularly relevant to social media, although the literature on social media and marketing has not given it much attention. Thus, in order to shed light on why people use social media, this essay will employ the uses and gratifications theory. This study specifically aims to: (1) highlight the significance of the uses and gratifications theory in relation to social media; (2) apply the theory to social media; and (3) pinpoint the benefits and uses that users derive from social media use. This research aims to give a better and more thorough understanding of why consumers use social media by applying the uses and gratifications theory. We start by providing a quick overview of the research on social media and the uses and gratifications theory. We then go over the research findings and methodology. The article concludes by discussing the implications and findings of the present study.

After discussing the groupings several times, the researcher conducted on the 8 uses and gratification themes those themes can be discussed in the following paragraph:

1. SOCIAL INTERACTION
2. SEEKING INFORMATION
3. TIME-PASS
4. ENTERTAINMENT
5. RELAXATION
6. EXPRESSION OF OPINION
7. SHARING OF INFORMATION
8. KNOWLEDGE ABOUT OTHERS

Explanation of the above themes are as follows:

1. **SOCIAL INTERACTION**: 78% of the respondent who was interviewed mentioned using social media for social interaction. They had mentioned that Facebook, which is now named a Meta can be used as a place to interact and socialize with others, and Instagram can be more used for watching reels and watching other videos. It has also been discovered that Instagram has become more popular among the youth between the ages of 18 years to 35 years and Facebook is popular among all segments of the age group. Respondents in the interview inform that they use social media to interact with friends' family and relatives and find old friends and make new friends.
2. **SEEKING INFORMATION:** 76% of the respondents reported that they use social media to get information about various events, birthday parties, and other social gatherings. They also inform that basic information about sales of various deals on different products. It has also been informed that information about the celebrity and what is going on in their life it is also the main concern.
3. **TIME PASS:** 80% inform that they use social media when they have idle time am you and want to do something. Many inform that social media can be used as a platform to pass time during the workplace or in college. They refresh themselves and feel informed by just checking their social media accounts. Some students have stated that " they use social media during the class to pass their time" some stated that" they use social media when the class is boring". During the lockdown, this platform is widely used for the purpose of passing the time as most of the individuals have nothing to do during this situation.
4. **ENTERTAINMENT:** 78% of the respondents reported that they use social media for entertainment purposes. During the lockdown it has fulfilled their requirement because they use social media for playing games, listening to music watching videos and movies, and respondents feel entertained by watching short reels. They enjoy listening to jokes, watching the comments, and other stuff made by uh their friends or relatives. Some respondents used to regularly play e various online games with their friends through this social media platform.

5. **RELAXATION:** 71% of the respondent believe that they use social media for the relaxation purpose." it is relaxing to go through the profiles of others"," it is an escape from reality"," we are very close to the virtual world"," I forget all my I worries and problems". It has also been reported that they escaped from the stress of the real world. Around 60% of the respondents mention that they use social media to escape from the real world and the real problem they use to face every day.

6. **EXPRESSION OF OPINION:** 72 percent Due to the advancement of media technology, the diversification of personal interests, and the need for satisfaction, opinion discussions on social media have grown more diverse (M. Jing, 2011). This unique feature encourages the creation of social media chat groups, also known as social media groups, on platforms like WeChat, WhatsApp, and online forums. (Y. Chen, 2015). Every social media group consists of regular participants and concentrates on particular subjects (G. M. Yu, 2014).

7. **SHARING OF INFORMATION:** 78% of the respondents believe that social media can be used to share information about personal, professional, or other social-related aspects.

8. **KNOWLEDGE ABOUT OTHERS:** This type of social media use, which is characterized as observing people, things, and what other people do, was brought up by 40% of respondents. This theme's title comes from a 2002 study by Kaye and Johnson on why people use the Internet to research political issues. The strategies that respondents cited varied for keeping an eye on other people on social media. Some of the people who answered the questions described themselves as "snoopy," "spy on people," "creep on people," "spy on their skids," and "look at stuff about others without them knowing about it." Many stated that they make an effort to keep in touch with others and that they are interested in what they are doing.

CONCLUSION

The research paper has analyzed and demonstrated the importance and usefulness of the uses and gratification theory in social media research. The conclusion is based on the exploratory study. The applicability of the uses and gratification theory towards social media helps to explain many reasons why my audience and consumers use and like ok to spend time on social media (Eginli,2018). In-depth interviews covering all points of view on the research issue were done by the researcher, who primarily used open-ended questions to obtain extensive information. The most crucial component of this study methodology is face-to-face communication. Researchers can watch participants, emotions, data, and experiences. The social sciences, including journalism, law, business, and communication, frequently use this research methodology (Tekin, 2006:101). From the index, it has been found and provide a very useful and comprehensive understanding of consumers using digital media (Eginli,2018). These results can help various businesses to effectively market it and communicate with existing and potential customers. It also provides how social media has become a part and parcel of the current situation.

People must be able to actualize the expression feature in interpersonal communication; this applies to both internal and face-to-face interactions. The responses from the participants indicate that social networking sites are very useful for sharing inner thoughts and for interacting with others. It is also mentioned that they find it easier to communicate with others and share personal information, particularly when it comes to elucidating their emotions, than it is in day-to-day interactions (Eginli, 2018). On the other hand, in daily life, it is frequently the case that certain expressions that are difficult to convey in person or unsaid feelings or ideas that are easily shared on social media platforms.

Social networking site users describe these platforms as four-dimensional, expressive, relational-socialization, cooperative, and information-sharing, but they also adjust to the need for regular face-to-face interactions. The Uses and Gratification theory, which emphasizes more on what people do with media than how media affects people, is used to evaluate these findings (Eginli, 2018). According to McGuire (1974), social media increases the number of communication channels available to users who are deeply engaged with the content. Nonetheless, social networking sites enable users to exchange

links, photos, and comments in addition to providing for people's everyday needs and inspiring basic motivation (Quan-Haase and Young, 2010). The current study found eight applications for the social media theory. These include social interaction (78%), information seeking (76%), passing the time (80%), entertainment (78%), relaxation (71%), information sharing (778%), learning about others (40%), and expressing one's opinion (72%).

The uses and gratification theory has relevance and ought to be given more weight in social media research and social media marketing, according to this study, which can contribute to the literature in a number of ways. To start. Finally, it helps different academic and business communities understand the rapidly growing world and market of digital media. The paper's qualitative design offers a lively understanding of how and why consumers use digital media.

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