Online News Consumption and the Gratification Level of its Users: A Foundation for a Media Literacy Action Plan

Dr. Macario G. GAYETA

University of the East Caloocan

College of Arts & Sciences, Department of Communication

Metro Manila, Philippines

doc.aiyo@gmail.com

ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8183-5234

Abstract

News consumption methods are changing with more traditional media taking their back seat to personal, portable, and other connected devices. This instant access also leads to more news-fueling time for local, national, and international news. This study looked at online news consumption and five gratifications among two hundred and seventy-seven communication, and journalism university students in Metro Manila, Philippines. A quantitative method was used to confirm five motivations based on past research and to find new gratification. Results show that the respondents confirmed four uses and gratification of previous research (identify signaling, social relationship, escape, entertainment) and found one new gratification, "infotainment." Results also revealed that online news websites were statistically relevant. Significant relationships exist between respondents and demographics about online news consumption and demographics are statistically significant. Demographic information and online news consumption are relevant to communication and journalism students. However, the user's level of uses and gratifications is a predictor of online news consumption. Only surveillance can predict the online news consumption of students. Also, this study finds that reading online news by students is often more motivated by amusement and pleasure infotainment as a form of dissemination of information. It was argued that online news consumption contributed to the existing body of literature with a specific audience of 18-year-olds. Infotainment is a dominant factor in online news consumption throughout the results and discussions.

Keywords – *Online news consumption, uses, and gratification, communication and journalism students, Manila, Philippines*

I. INTRODUCTION

The history of journalism in the Philippines can be traced from traditional media newsrooms until online journalism takes the stage of technological advancement and reshape the ordinary routine of Filipino journalists. More research on uses and gratifications was conducted related to the Internet and a new gratification framework has been proposed but no research has been published relevant in this study.

Online news consumption sets a trendy engaging activity among young adults. According to [1] media convergence around the world is the norm of online journalism. Online news websites in the Philippines operated separately from traditional media and embraced the online medium. The

context of communication can be approached through the understanding of uses and gratification to the intrinsic value of the Uses and Gratifications Theory in identifying communication patterns of any social concept. This theory has been used for more than 60 years to study the public perceptions of gratifications sought and obtained in mass communication across a variety of constructs such as television programs, phone usage, and print media [2] [3] [4].

According to a scholar [5] newspaper was capable of bringing technological advancement which can be altered between media and its respective consumers. [6] explains that newspaper creates a reading habit, differentiates people reading, the art of learning, and a repository of knowledge among readers in any creed of people in the society we live in; reading for young adult needs to keep abreast for world news [7]. Among social networks, Facebook is the most important social network for searching, reading, viewing, and sharing the news online [8]. According to [9] the consumption of the Internet has become one that characterizes online news and the size of the audience to a large extent. [10] fostered that newspapers help to enrich newspaper reading habits, knowledge, and awareness and could serve as a study habit among students. In the Philippines, newspaper readership has declined gradually because the Philippines have more than thirty online news publications [11] [12] with more than fourteen broadsheets in the daily circulations [13].

This study will examine the relationship between reading online news websites and online news consumption using uses and gratifications. The measures for news are adapted from a study in terms of consumption and theory [14].

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the study is to investigate online news consumption and the gratification level of its users among communication students. The general objective is two-fold: (1) to investigate online news consumption and (2) to develop a media literacy program for communication students. Specifically, this study investigated the demographic profile; the respondent's level of online news consumption; uses and gratifications level in terms of identity signaling, surveillance, social relations, escapism, and entertainment. It also determined the relationship between respondents' level of uses and gratification and demographic profile such as sex, age, and course of study; determined the relationship between online news consumption, and uses and gratification; differences among online news consumption, level of uses and gratification and demographic profile; and the relationship between respondents' online news consumption and uses and gratification level. Lastly, it aimed to propose a plan of action in media literacy.

II. METHODS

The study is a descriptive-quantitative with a total sample of 277 communication students in Metro Manila, Philippines. Majority are females (210) (75.70%) and (67) (24.20%) are males. A self-structured questionnaire was administered. A letter of request was addressed and sent to the Office of the President, Chancellor's Office, VP for Academic Affairs, deans, and associate deans. The data were then tallied, tabulated, and analyzed. This study was approved by the Committee on Research in the College of Arts and Sciences, University Research Coordination, Office of President, and Chancellor's Office in the University of the East Caloocan, Metro Manila, Philippines. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS. Descriptive statistics such as mean,

percentage, the standard deviation was used to rank the order of the demographic profile while the Likert scale was used in scoring respondents in online news consumption. Table 1 shows the demographic information of respondents who were three HEIs (*N=277).*

Table 1

Demographic Information

Profile of Respondents	University/College	Frequency	Percent
School	University A	120	43.30
	University B	115	41.50
	College C	42	15.20
	Total	277	100.00
Gender	Male	67	24.20
	Female	210	75.80
	Total	277	100.00
Age	16-17	171	61.70
	18-19	87	31.50
	20 & above	19	19.00
	Total	277	100.00
Level of Education	Freshmen	95	34.30
	Sophomore	87	31.40
	Junior	37	31.40
	Senior	58	13.40
	Total	**277**	**100.00**
Course of study	BA Communication Arts	80	28.90
	BA Communication	82	29.60
	BA Journalism	115	41.50
	Total	**277**	**100.00**

The majority of the sample is 16-20 years old; age is a factor that influences the news platform. The majority of respondents are BA Journalism composed of 115 or 41.50%; while the majority of

respondents were reading online news 251 or 90.60%, implies that internet access among students has a huge impact on communication.

To interpret the mean scores, the following value scales were employed. Reliability and validity of the study were tested; identity signaling (Cronbach α=.81); surveillance (Cronbach α=.79); social relations (Cronbach α=.84); escapism (Cronbach α=.74); entertainment (Cronbach α=.75). Table 2 shows the scale used to interpret online news consumption and the gratification level of its users.

To gather data from respondents, a survey questionnaire was administered. Part I dealt with demographic profile consists of 12 attributes; Part II focuses on the online news consumption of 12 attributes, and Part III focuses on the gratification level consists of 20 attributes, Part IV focuses on reading online news websites with 6-attributes.

Table 2
The scale used to interpret online news consumption and the gratification level of its users

Scale	Interpretation	Mean Range	Interpretation
5	Strongly Agree	4.50-5.00	Very often/Very relevant
4	Agree	3.50-4.49	Often/relevant
3	Neutral	2.50-3.49	Sometimes/fairly relevant
2	Disagree	1.50-2.49	Rarely/relevant to a little extent
1	Strongly Disagree	1.00-1.49	Never/not relevant at all

Chi-square was used to test the significant relationship between the level of users and gratification, demographic profile (age, sex, course of study). Pearson's coefficient was used to test if there is a significant relationship between a reading news website and online news consumption obtained by respondents, online news consumption and uses and gratification level and ANOVA was also used in the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 3
Online news consumption

Indicators	Mean	Std. Dev.	Description
• I read national news.	3.33	0.81	Sometimes
2. I read the weather news.	3.55	0.89	Often
3. I read world news.	3.34	0.92	Sometimes
4. I read business news.	2.78	1.02	Sometimes
5. I read science and technology	3.39	0.98	Sometimes

news.			
6. I read development news.	3.25	0.90	Sometimes
7. I read sports news.	3.28	1.04	Sometimes
8. I read local news.	3.61		Often
9. In enjoy computer work.	3.52	0.96	Often
10. I read health news.	3.43	0.89	Sometimes
11. I read the traffic updates.	3.36	1.13	Sometimes
12. I read entertainment news.			
	3.55	1.05	Often
Overall Mean	**3.42**	**0.62**	**Sometimes**

Legend: 4.50-5.00-Very often; 3.50-4.49-Often; 2.50-3.49-Sometimes; 1.50-2.49-rarely; 1.00-1.49-Never

Table 3 illustrates online news consumption obtained by respondents: local news *(M=3.61) (SD=0.96)*; arts/culture *(M=3.52) (SD=0.89);* weather news *(M=3.55) (SD=0.89)* with *WM=3.52; SD=0.62*, interpreted "sometimes".

According to [15] students in the Gulf region are active users of local news online even published on Twitter, following Internet discussion platforms, links via email, and even commented on the local online news.

The majority of the respondents prefer to read politics, entertainment, sports news, crime stories, education, and business news, thus, men have a slightly stronger interest in political news, sports news, crime, business, and defense news than women, whereas, women are ahead for reading entertainment, development, health, education and feature news stories [16].

Table 4
Uses and gratification level of respondents

Gratifications	Mean	Interpretation
Identity signaling	2.92	Neutral
Surveillance	3.77	Agree
Social relation	3.72	Agree
Escapism	2.57	Neutral
Entertainment	3.69	Agree
Uses and gratification	3.33	Neutral

Legend: 4.50-5.00-Strongly agree; 3.50-4.49-Agree; 2.50-3.49-Neutral; 1.50-2.49-Disagree; 1.00-1.49-Strongly Disagree

Table 4 summarizes the five factors and contents of uses and gratification level of respondents: surveillance gratification *(M=3.77*, agree); social gratification (*M=3.72*, often) and entertainment gratification (*M=3.69*, agree) and overall gratifications (*M=3.33*) describes as

neutral. [17] mentioned that Qatari young adult's online news consumption boosts their confidence using different news media platforms. The data in this study were grouped as follows: (1) demographic information; (2) level of online news consumption; (3) uses and gratifications level in terms of identity signaling; surveillance, social relation, escapism, entertainment; (4) relationship between sex, age, course study; (5) relationship between a reading news website and online news consumption; (6) relationship between online news consumption and uses and gratification; (7) difference between online news consumption, level of uses and gratification, demographic profile; (8) relationship between respondents online news consumption and uses and gratification.

Table 5
Uses and Gratification Level of Users on identity signaling

Indicators	Mean	Std. Dev.	Description
1. I feel important.	3.39	0.93	Neutral
2. I impress others.	3.13	0.83	Neutral
3. I pretend to be popular.	2.25	0.95	Disagree
Overall Mean	**2.92**	**0.71**	**Neutral**

Legend: 4.50-5.00-Strongly agree; 3.50-4.49-Agree; 2.50-3.49-Neutral; 1.50-2.49-Disagree; 1.00-1.49-Strongly Disagree

Table 5 illustrates that identity signaling or personal function in U&G indicates overall mean *(M=2.92) (SD=0.71)* describes as neutral. Diversion, personal relationships, social relationships, personal identity, surveillance, imagination, stimulation, and mood changing were gratification found in using the Internet [18].

Table 6
Uses and Gratification Level of Users on surveillance

Indicators	Mean	Std. Dev.	Description
1. I keep track of the international news.	3.62	0.85	Agree
2. I keep track of the local news.	3.89	0.80	Agree
3. I keep track of the political news.	3.70	0.86	Agree
4. I stay informed of occasions and events.	3.89	0.81	Agree
Overall Mean	**3.77**	**0.65**	**Agree**

Legend: 4.50-5.00-Strongly agree; 3.50-4.49-Agree; 2.50-3.49-Neutral; 1.50-2.49-Disagree; 1.00-1.49-Strongly Disagree

Table 6 illustrates that the U&G level of users are abreast in reading news and information posted on Internet (M=3.77) (SD=0.65) describes as "agree'.

Table 7
Uses and Gratification Level of Users on social relation

Indicators	Mean	Std. Dev.	Description
1. I let people know I care about their feelings.	3.67	0.94	Often
2. .I stay in touch with a person who understands me.	4.09	0.77	Often
3. I encourage other people.	3.90	0.87	Often
4. I comfort a person.	3.87	0.92	Often
5. I talk about my problem.	3.33	1.00	Sometimes
6. I feel involved with what happens with others.	3.27	1.03	Sometimes
Overall Mean	**3.79**	**0.63**	**Often**

Legend: 4.50-5.00-Strongly agree; 3.50-4.49-Agree; 2.50-3.49-Neutral; 1.50-2.49-Disagree; 1.00-1.49-Strongly Disagree

Table 7 illustrates that social relations were interpreted "often". Social relation connotes a special function that reflects social relation through the medium and obtained an M=4.09 and SD=0.77. Social relation means creating or maintain links with other individuals or groups.

The result of the analysis for the distribution of respondents U&G of users (escapism) is shown in Table 8 were interpreted as "neutral" with overall mean=2.57 and SD=0.89.

Table 8
Uses and Gratification Level of Users on escapism

Indicators	Mean	Std. Dev.	Description
1. I escape from what I am doing.	2.75	1.03	Neutral
2. I escape from my responsibilities.	2.26	1.07	Disagree
3. I postpone the task assign to me.	2.44	0.98	Disagree
4. I forget my daily tasks.	2.46	1.04	Disagree
Overall Mean	**2.57**	**0.89**	**Neutral**

Legend: 4.50-5.00-Strongly agree; 3.50-4.49-Agree; 2.50-3.49-Neutral; 1.50-2.49-Disagree; 1.00-1.49-Strongly Disagree

Table 8 illustrates the distribution of respondents' uses and gratification level of users of entertainment. The average M=3.69 with SD=0.67 was described as "agree". The researcher [20]

revealed that young adult Chinese were keen on entertainment programs while the behavior of Malaysian young adults was engaged also in entertainment news regardless of the medium used online. Entertainment function is very encouraging and

paying more attention in the entertainment media program through Internet.

Escapist function enabling a flee from daily worries in diversionary tactics free from all worries and chatting with others on the net. Internet usage has obtained escapism, transaction, privacy, information, interaction, socialization, and economic motivations [19].

Table 9
Uses and Gratification Level of Users on entertainment

Indicators	Mean	Std. Dev.	Description
1. Credibility of the news sites.	3.68	0.76	Relevant
2. Popularity of the websites.	3.63	0.81	Relevant
3. Content of the websites.	3.95	0.76	Relevant
4. Quick updates of news and information.	4.14	0.73	Relevant
5. Website construction is attractive.	3.71	0.88	Relevant
6. Connectivity of Internet and wifi.	3.90	0.87	Relevant
Average Weighted Mean	**3.93**	**0.57**	**Relevant**

Indicators	Mean	Std. Dev.	Description
1. I amuse myself.	3.32	0.93	Neutral
2. I have a good time with friends.	4.18	0.83	Neutral
3. I feel relax reading an online newspaper during my free time.	3.57	0.95	Disagree
Overall Mean	3.69	0.67	Agree

Legend: 4.50-5.00-Strongly agree; 3.50-4.49-Agree; 2.50-3.49-Neutral; 1.50-2.49-Disagree; 1.00-1.49-Strongly Disagree

Table 9 illustrates respondents uses and gratification level on entertainment, with *(M=4.18)* and *(SD=0.79)* described as "agree".

Table 10
Relevance of reading online news

Legend: 4.50-5.00-Strongly agree; 3.50-4.49-Agree; 2.50-3.49-Neutral; 1.50-2.49-Disagree; 1.00-1.49-Strongly Disagree

Table 10 illustrates that reading online news is described as relevant with an overall mean=3.93 and SD=0.57. Researchers [21] found that newspaper readers prefer the digital channel when searching for news updates.

Table 11
Relationship between respondents uses and gratification and demographics

Profile	Chi-Square	df	p-value	Decision
School	11.573	6	0.072	No significant relationship
Age	2.848	3	0.416	No significant relationship
Gender	8.836	12	0.717	No significant relationship
Level of education	12.078	9	0.209	No significant relationship
Course of study Reading online news	4.741	6	0.577	No significant relationship
Frequency of internet use	10.159	3	0.017	There is significant relationship
	7.053	9	0.632	No significant relationship

*p<.05 (Ho=Rejected); **p>.05 (Ho=Accepted)

Table 11 illustrates the relationship between respondents' uses and gratification and demographic profile. The null hypothesis is rejected with (*p<0.017*), other variables such as school, age, sex, level of education, course of study, and frequency of internet users have no significant relationship between U&G and the null hypothesis is accepted and no significant relationship is established. The researcher and company [23] found that reading online newspapers such as features, international, national, regional, or local news preferred by Indian librarians.

Table 12
Relationship between respondents uses and gratification and school

Gratifications	Chi-Square	df	p-value	Decision

Identity signaling	6.639	8	0.576	No significant relationship
Surveillance	11.93	6	0.064	No significant relationship
Social relation	14.042	6	0.029	There is significant relationship
Escapism	12.078	8	0.148	No significant relationship
Entertainment	12.766	6	0.047	There is a significant relationship

*p<.05 (Ho=Rejected); **p>.05 (Ho=Accepted)*

Table 12 illustrates the results of chi-square and p-value of the samples carried out to determine the relationship obtained in U&G and demographic profile (school). Result reveals that both social relation *(p<0.029)* and entertainment *(p<0.047)* have a significant relationship, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 13
Relationship between respondents uses and gratifications and age

Gratifications	Chi-Square	df	p-value	Decision
Identity signaling	15.995	4	0.003	There is significant relationship
Surveillance	1.088	3	0.078	No significant relationship
Social relation	14.535	3	0.002	There is significant relationship
Escapism	6.981	4	0.137	No significant relationship
Entertainment	6.968	3	0.073	No significant relationship

*p<.05 (Ho=Rejected); **p>.05 (Ho=Accepted)*

Table 13 illustrates the relationship between respondents' uses and gratification and age. The null hypothesis is accepted with (*p<0.073*), and entertainment has no significant relationship in

U&G and demographic profile. Studies show that with age, people consume more news and show more interest in the news online [22] [23].

Table 14
Relationship between respondents uses and gratifications and gender

Gratifications	Chi-Square	df	p-value	Decision
Identity signaling	21.716	16	0.153	No significant relationship
Surveillance	12.275	12	0.424	No significant relationship
Social relation	15.483	12	0.216	No significant relationship
Escapism	18.007	16	0.324	No significant relationship
Entertainment	22.288	12	0.034	There is significant relationship

*p<.05 (Ho=Rejected); **p>.05 (Ho=Accepted)*

Table 14 illustrates the relationship between respondents' uses and gratification and gender. The results reveal that entertainment *(p<0.034)* and gender have both significant relationships; the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 15
Relationship between respondents uses and gratifications and course of study

Gratifications	Chi-Square	df	p-value	Decision
Identity signaling	7.221	8	0.513	No significant relationship
Surveillance	14.475	6	0.025	There is significant relationship
Social relation	10.831	6	0.094	No significant relationship
Escapism	9.711	8	0.286	No significant relationship
				No significant relationship
Entertainment	8.320	6	0.216	

*p<.05 (Ho=Rejected); **p>.05 (Ho=Accepted)*

Table 15 illustrates the relationship between respondents' uses and gratification and the course of study. Every gratification was recorded with no significant relationship with the demographic

profile.

The results reveal that only surveillance *(p<0.025)* has a significant relationship, and the gratification dimension is based on the past studies of U&G including surveillance.

Table 16
Relationship between respondents uses and gratifications and reading online news

Gratifications	Chi-Square	df	p-value	Decision
Identity signaling	7.068	4	0.132	No significant relationship
Surveillance	4.848	3	0.183	No significant relationship
Social relation	0.661	3	0.882	No significant relationship
Escapism	4.539	4	0.338	No significant relationship
Entertainment	6.290	3	0.098	No significant relationship

*p<.05 (Ho=Rejected); **p>.05 (Ho=Accepted)*

Table 16 illustrates that there is no significant relationship among the variables of uses and gratifications on reading online news.

Table 17
Relationship between respondents uses and gratifications and frequency of internet use

Gratifications	Chi-Square	df	p-value	Decision
Identity signaling	12.594	12	0.399	No significant relationship
Surveillance	16.248	9	0.062	No significant relationship
Social relation	6.137	9	0.726	No significant relationship
Escapism	14.768	12	0.254	No significant relationship
Entertainment	13.018	9	0.162	No significant relationship

*p<.05 (Ho=Rejected); **p>.05 (Ho=Accepted)*

Table 17 illustrates the respondent's U&G and if there is a significant relationship in the frequency of internet use and reveals that there is no significant relationship among variables for internet use.

Table 18
Relationship between respondents' demographic profile and reading online news

Profile	Chi-Square	df	p-value	Decision
School	4.613	4	0.329	No significant relationship
Age	0.414	2	0.813	No significant relationship
Gender	12.396	8	0.134	No significant relationship
Level of education	16.433	6	0.012	There is significant relationship
Course of study Reading online news	2.886	4	0.577	No significant relationship
	0.410	2	0.815	No significant relationship
Frequency of internet use				No significant relationship
	6.241	6	0.397	

*p<.05 (Ho=Rejected); **p>.05 (Ho=Accepted)

Table 18 illustrates the results of chi-square and p-value of the samples to determine the relationship between demographics and reading online news, not level of education *(p=0.012)* have a significant relationship among variables, the null hypothesis is rejected. Researchers [24] found that there was no correlation between the credibility of the news source, type of news source, organization, and type of information, reputation, and presentation of news.

Based on the result, among all factors of U&G, only surveillance can predict students' online news consumption. This study confirmed the most important gratification in online news consumption which is carried out at the U&G level of users, Internet is the provider of a variety of information and communication in the different media platforms. [25] also confirmed that those who belong to the new generation of Internet users are called interacting.

A Foundation for a Media Literacy Action Plan

To improve media literacy among communication students, the following action plan was

developed. (1) Integrate digital and media literacy competencies in teaching online journalism for BA Communication Arts, Communication and Journalism and other major subjects; (2) Integrate media literacy in the summer learning program of BA in Communication Arts, Communication and Journalism and allied field and research-oriented program; (3) Promote media literacy in public schools local government units, NGO's, libraries, information offices, (4) Support media literacy in higher education institutions to have an interface between teachers and students to give media literacy experience and (5) Develop online video documentation of digital media literacy to build expertise in communication program.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study confirmed with the greater growth of online news consumption among communication students and the higher level of gratification was obtained from online news consumption. Therefore, this study of online news consumption extends and has become a contribution to the existing body of literature of U&G with an audience of 18 years old. Most importantly, this study found a new gratification on Internet news called "infotainment".

With this, the researcher recommends that since communication students are engaged in reading online news, it is recommended that administrators of higher education institutions may look for ways on how to improve the Internet use in the classroom instruction to guide students. Because reading online news is a practice among communication students, it is recommended that duplication of study will be created to enrich the analysis of news websites and other media platforms to support the scarcity of literature on news consumption research & U&G in the Philippines.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The information and email addresses provided in this journal publication will be used solely for research purposes; all participants were anonymous and confidential. The respondents for the survey have consented, and permission has been sought. The author declares that he has no competing interests in the manuscript's writing and that the content has not yet been reproduced, submitted, or published in any journal.

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