

## Uses and Gratification of the Star Online Facebook Page

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**Abstract:** News organizations start using social media as news delivery channels and audience reach. The star is one of the leading newspapers in the country and utilize the social media to communicate with the readers with >200,000 likes. The present study aimed to test the perceptions on four factors of gratification (contribution, discovery, social interaction and entertainment) among the star online Facebook page likers. A total 92 Facebook users was selected randomly from list of personal liked the page. A set of web-based questionnaire was email to the respondent's Facebook personal messaging system. Results show that television and newspaper are still being utilized despite the emerging of online news media portals in the country. Furthermore, entertainment is the top most priority for an individual to access to media. There were three uses and gratification factors extracted. Users acknowledged that they valued the star online Facebook page because it helped them to keep up with the unexpected stories around the world and provide entertaining news. While social interaction has always affected the dissemination of news, the study suggests that social media are becoming central to the way people experience news. The study contributes to our understanding of the evolving relationship between the organization's online media tool and the audience.

**Key words:** Facebook, the star online, uses and gratification, audience, dissemination

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### INTRODUCTION

The emergence of social media has caught the attention of organizations especially in Malaysia. Social media have changed the nature of communication by giving equal opportunities and providing a platform for individuals and organizations to communicate interactively in multi dimension voices (Reitz, 2012). Most of the organizations have established a social media sites such as in Facebook to communicate with their stakeholders (Weeks and Holbert, 2013).

Although, Facebook started as a platform connecting individuals, today's organizations also have the chance to create fan pages for the organization itself or for its products. Stakeholders have moved from visiting organization's websites to visiting Facebook pages (Haigh *et al.*, 2013). Though, participants were not likely to friend an organization when they first started having a presence on Facebook (Haigh *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, an organization should include corporate ability information when communicating on Facebook in a way that the page likers would learn about specials/sales and new product features/services.

News organizations have started to focus on digital environment rather than printed copies to enrich their

visibility in the news dissemination (Armstrong and Gao, 2010). In Malaysia, the national newspapers The Star, New Straits Times, Berita Harian, Utusan Malaysia and Sin Chew Daily and the tabloid, Harian Metro have Facebook accounts to disseminate news in the digital media. They are trying to develop new forms of journalism within current norms and practices to maintain their authority in an online media environment.

While, it is important for news organizations to provide a well-established platform for readers to get accurate information, engaging online audiences has been tough (Hille and Bakker, 2013). Chavez found that recommendation of stories by friends on Facebook leads to an increased readership of the news stories. The audiences have certain expectations of media that support in media choice and needs gratification (Alhabash and McAlister, 2015). Yet, the reasons for social media users to seek news from social media rather than the traditional way are less studied in Malaysia.

Whiting and Williams (2013) found that gratifications received are good predictors of media use and recurring media use. This study seeks to examine the issue of uses and gratification (contribution, discovery, social interaction and entertainment) of an organization's Facebook news page. This study investigates the

relationship between uses and gratifications of Malaysian Facebook users and the star online Facebook page to help the organization improve their social media visibility in the digital media. The research questions addressed in this study were:

- What are the other sources of news among The Star Online Facebook page users?
- What are the motives for the Facebook users using the Star Online Facebook page?
- What are the gratification factors for The Star Online Facebook page?

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**Sampling:** This is a cross-sectional study and descriptive studies was used to estimate the sample size. The Star provided the list of Facebook users email address who has liked star online Facebook page in the year 2014 from their database. The respondents were selected through simple random selections method from the email list given. The emails were sorted in alphabetical order from A-Z and numbered. To make the selection process more systematically, online random integer generator is used to generate 100 random numbers. Online questionnaire was sent to their Facebook messaging system. Their responses were obtained online. A total of 92 respondents answered the questionnaires completely.

**Instrument:** The questionnaire measured four items which are contributions, entertainment, social interaction and discovery. Factor 1 referred to users valuing their knowledge of certain news by posting comments and participating in conversation around the article. Factor 2 contained items that refer to discovery of interesting topics in the page. Factor 3 contained items related to social aspects of using the group. Factor 4 contained items related to entertainment. A total of 41 questions were prepared which included the media usage and patterns.

**Reliability:** The researcher piloted the questionnaire among 30 Facebook users for a period of 3 days from 2-4 April 2014. All of the questionnaires were returned. An internal consistency reliability test was conducted on the items of the questionnaires. A Cronbach’s alpha of 0.805 was obtained which indicates a high level of internal consistency.

**Statistics:** All of the statistical analyses were performed using SPSS Version 21.0.

**RESULTS**

**Respondents background:** Table 1 shows the distribution of socio-demographic and media usage characteristics of respondents. This study consisted of both male and female with male being the majority (61/92, 66.3%). Maximum numbers of respondents were aged between 20-40 years old (72/92, 78.3%). As far as ethnicity is concerned, almost half of the respondents were Indians (52/92, 56.5%) followed by Malays, Chinese and finally other ethnic group. Other ethnic groups that participated in this study include those of internationals, Sabah and Sarawak. Almost three quarter of the respondents were unmarried (67/92, 72.8%). Education background was an important aspect that will influence online exposure and usage of respondents. In this study, maximum numbers of respondents, about 60.4% are degree holders (56/92). The lowest reported highest education qualification was SPM level (8/92, 8.8%). The subscription period for the star Facebook page skewed towards 1 and 2 year period that accounts for 83.7% (77/92).

**Research question 1:** Other news sources respondents were asked about their other sources to get daily news apart from Facebook. Respondents were allowed to make more than one choice. It can be seen in Fig. 1 that apart from online news source, newspaper still remains the most

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Variables	N	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	61	66.3
Female	31	33.7
<b>Age category (years)</b>		
≤20	10	10.9
20–40	72	78.2
>40	10	10.9
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Malay	24	26.1
Chinese	12	13.1
Indian	52	56.5
Others	4	4.3
<b>Marital status</b>		
Unmarried	67	72.8
Married	24	26.1
Married but separated	1	1.1
<b>Education</b>		
SPM	8	8.7
STPM	4	4.3
Diploma	12	13.0
Degree	56	60.9
Postgraduate	12	13.0
<b>The star online Facebook page subscription duration (years)</b>		
1-2	77	83.7
2-3	6	7.6
3-4	3	3.3
5-6	1	1.1

sought after news source (55/92, 59.8%). Following this, about 55.4% (51/92) of respondents agree that they also watch daily news via local TV news. Apart from TV, radio has become a major telecommunication source before internet era come into play. Today, radio still plays a major role in distributing news as 40.2% (37/92) of respondents chose radio is their alternative news source. At lowest end, 31.5 and 28.3% also chose Magazines and other news source. No information is available for other news source. It probably could be a verbal form of news received from friends, community gathering, conferences and et cetera.

**Research objective 2:** Motives to use the star online Facebook page: respondents were asked about types of news that they prefer to read on Facebook. The options given were news on entertainment, sports, politics, health, science and technology, business, people and events in my community, national government and

politics. It can be seen from Fig. 2 and 3 that entertainment was the most preferred types of news on Facebook by almost three quarter (65/92, 70.7%) of respondents. The second most liked news on Facebook was news on people and events in my community (59/92, 64.1%). News on science and technology is also like by many Facebook

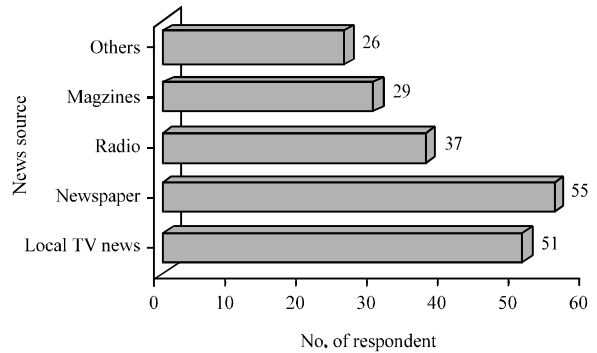


Fig. 1: Other news source for respondents apart from

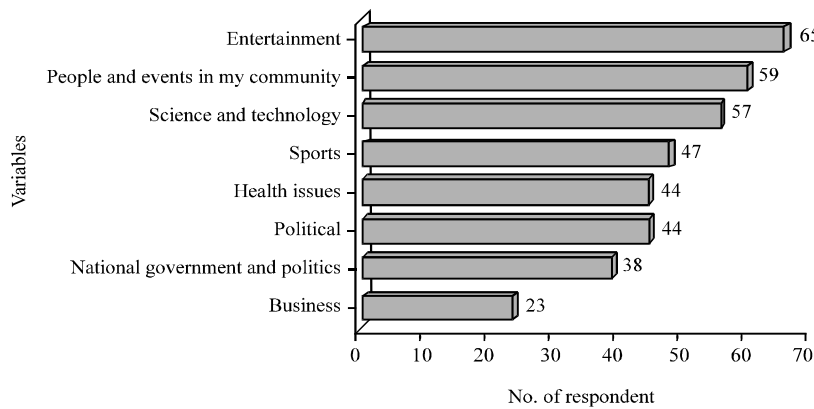


Fig. 2: Types of news liked by respondents

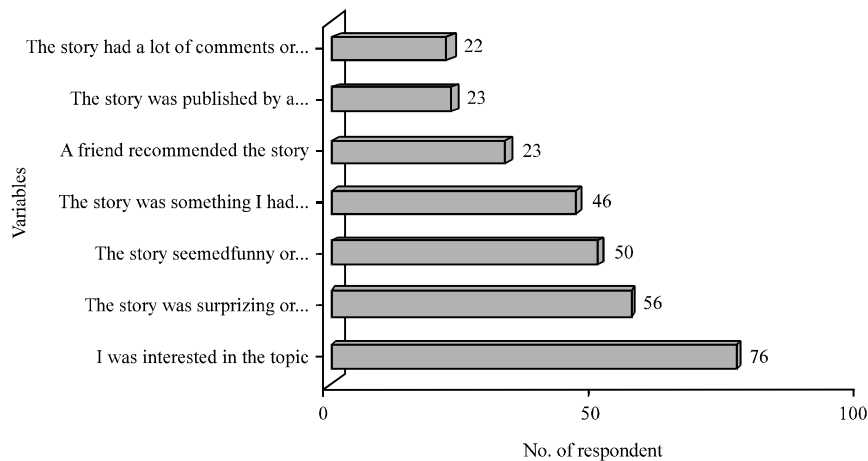


Fig. 3: Reasons to click to news stories in Facebook

users (55/92, 59.8%). This was followed by sports (51.1%), political (47.8%), health issues (47.8%), national government and politics (41.3%) as well as the least liked business (25.0%) news.

Next, respondents were asked about the reasons for them to click to particular news stories in Facebook. A few options were provided to ease recall and respondents were allowed to choose more than one option. As shown in Fig. 3, among the feedback received, highest rated reason is because they were interested in the topic (76/92, 82.6%). About 60.9% (56/92) click the news because the story was surprising or unexpected. More than half of the respondents (50/92, 54.3%) said that they click a news as it seems to be funny or entertaining while half (46/92, 50.0%) recognized that the reason for them to click a particular news stories in Facebook is because the story is something they have been following. Other reasons were because the news story is recommended by friends (33/92, 35.9%), published by a preferred news organization (23/92, 25.0%) and the story had a lot of comments or likes (22/92, 23.9%).

Lastly, respondents were enquired about the method they interact with news post in Facebook. There are 5 options given and respondents were allowed to choose only one option. The output is shown in Fig. 4. To interact with news post, a larger portion (30/92, 32.6%) 'click on links to news storie's while 25% 'see headlines about the latest stories in the new's (23/92). This was followed by 'like or comment on news storie's (21/92, 22.8%), 'post or share links to news storie's (13/92, 14.1%) and 'discuss issues in the news with people on Facebook' (5/92, 5.4%).

**Research objective 3:** Uses and gratification factor uses and gratification were assessed on four scales: contribution, discovery, social interaction and entertainment. As given in Table 2 most number of respondent agree that 'the star online Facebook page has a responsibility to inform its reader on the current new's (M = 3.87, SD = 0.830) and 'The star online Facebook page has responsibility to help readers to gain information and knowledge' (M = 3.86, SD = 0.846). Respondents also agreed that the page has a responsibility to publish articles that helps the readers to understanding better on certain issues (M = 3.71, SD = 0.859), publish articles suitable for readers (M = 3.7, SD = 0.722), post latest news (M = 3.57, SD = 0.893) and discover news from the rest of the world (M = 3.55, SD = 0.894). The statement which was disagreed by most of the respondents is contributing to the page by giving comment (M = 2.43, SD = 0.976) and adding comments (M = 2.72, SD = 0.953) on the news

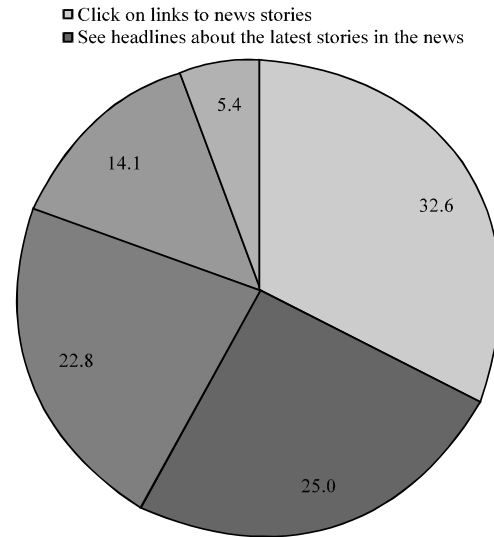


Fig. 4: Methods of interacting with news post in Facebook

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for uses and gratification variables

Constructs	Mean	SD	Mode
<b>Contribution</b>			
Provide high quality articles	3.51	0.763	3
Publish articles suitable for readers	3.70	0.722	4
Post latest news	3.57	0.893	4
Post current news	3.87	0.828	4
Responsibility to publish articles to better understand issues	3.71	0.859	3
Responsibility to help readers gain information and knowledge	3.86	0.846	4
Comment on news posted	2.43	0.976	2
Share my knowledge of news	2.95	0.942	3
Add comment on news posted	2.72	0.953	3
Like the discussion taking place	3.40	0.712	3
Share news articles from the page	3.42	0.929	3
<b>Discovery</b>			
Discover news from the rest of the world	3.55	0.894	4
Find news that cannot be found in other online source	2.79	0.884	3
Likes to read comments by other users post	3.48	0.791	3
Reading news articles changes my mood	3.03	0.818	3
Discover interesting facts	3.46	0.717	3
<b>Social interaction</b>			
See if my post been liked by others	3.02	0.812	3
Browse profile of others who are unknown when they commented on the page	2.86	0.990	3
Find mutual friends when someone unknown post any comment	3.01	1.094	4
<b>Social interaction</b>			
Try to understand members comment what? and why?	3.30	0.822	3
<b>Entertainment:</b>			
I like the news article posted	3.53	0.748	3
The news article posted makes me joyful and satisfy	3.29	0.792	3
I like reading comments posted by other users	3.48	0.791	3

article posted by or on the star online Facebook page. This shows that many of them merely visit the page and read news posted but do not always post comments.

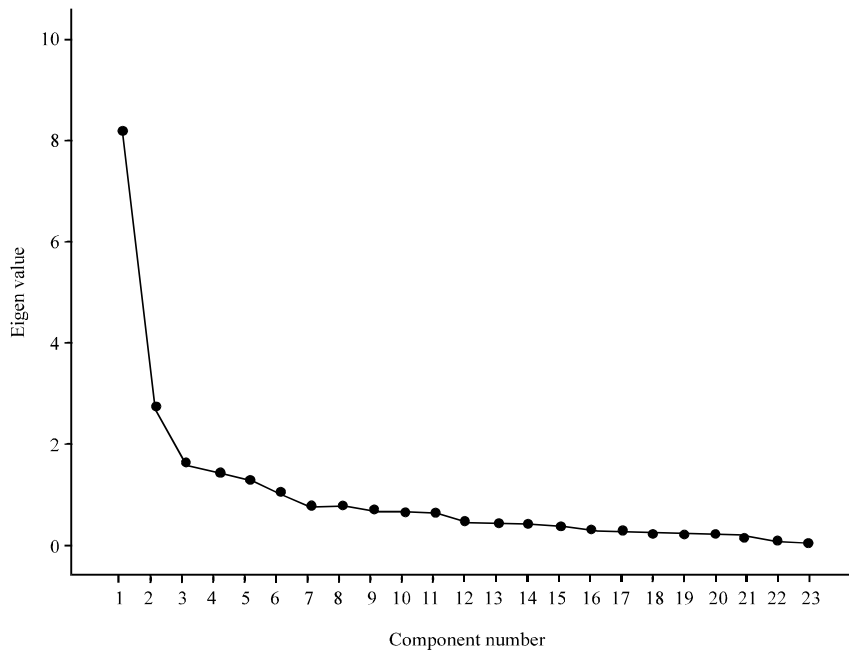


Fig. 5: Scree plot for uses and gratification factors

One-way MANOVA was performed in order to evaluate the gender based perception of each uses and gratification scales. Table 3 shows the overall score for each scale compared between genders and the statistics. Entertainment scale gives the highest mean score for both male and female. There was no statistically significant difference in perception based on gender,  $F(4,87) = 1.87$ ,  $p = 0.123$ ; Wilk's  $\lambda = 0.921$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.08$ . Hence, male and female respondents have similar perception towards the star online fb page uses and gratification scales.

Table 3: MANOVA analysis on gender based uses and gratification scale's score

Variables	Mean (SD)		One-way MANOVA statistics				
	Male	Female	df	F-values	Wilk's $\lambda$	Partial $\eta^2$	Sig.
Contribution	3.07 (0.73)	2.82 (0.61)	87	1.87	0.921	0.08	0.123
Discovery	3.34 (0.53)	3.14 (0.51)					
Social interaction	3.07 (0.77)	2.96 (0.65)					
Entertainment	3.58 (0.62)	3.23 (0.57)					

**Extraction of factors using exploratory factor analysis:** In analyzing gratifications obtained from Facebook users who have like the star online Facebook, an exploratory factor analysis of the scales was conducted using principle axis factoring varimax rotation. Principal axis factoring was recommended for gratification studies as it accounts for only the common variance in the variable scales as opposed to principle component factoring which also includes unique and error variance. The Barlett's test of sphericity was significant with  $p < 0.001$ . Therefore, factor analysis was feasible for this data. Besides, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) of 0.812 support the factor analysis. Eigenvalue larger than 1.00, a method based on Kaiser's rule of retaining factors, was used as a default method for this purpose. There were six factors retained with eigenvalue  $> 1.00$  that explained 70.7% of variance. However, the scree plot (Fig. 5) suggest that only 3 factors should be retained or is suffice, explaining 54.63% of the total variance.

Factors loadings were analyzed from the pattern matrix and were considered acceptable at 0.40 or higher and at least three variables defining each factor. Table 4 shows the factors extracted and their respective variables. The retained factors were named as information seeking, entertainment and interaction. Information seeking consisted of the greatest number of variables and explains about 36% variance. The strong factor loading ( $> 0.7$ ) were for 'I Like the News Article Posted', 'I Like to read comments by other users post' and 'i like reading comments posted by other user's. Gratification measurement scales represented by this factor were of all the four scales: contribution, discovery, social interaction and entertainment. Secondly, entertainment explained 11% of total variance with four variables derived from social interaction and discovery. Strong factor loading variable was 'browse profile of others who are unknown when they commented on the page'. The third factor extracted was named as interaction, contributing to approximately

Table 4: Factors extracted, variance explained and loadings of each variable

Factors	Variance (%)	Variable	Loading
Information Seeking	35.83	I Like the news article posted	0.713
		I Like to read comments by other users post	0.706
		I Like reading comments posted by other users	0.704
		Discover news from the rest of the world	0.689
		Try to understand members comment-what? And why?	0.583
Entertainment	11.75	Share news articles from the page	0.558
		Like the discussion taking place	0.49
		Browse profile of others who are unknown when they commented on the page	0.809
		Find mutual friends when someone unknown post any comment	0.775
		See if my post been liked by others	0.628
Interaction	7.04	Find news that cannot be found in other online source	0.535
		Comment on news posted	0.826
		Add comment on news posted	0.811

7% for the total variances. All of the variables extracted were derived from contribution scale and had factor loadings >0.7.

### DISCUSSION

Traditional printed newspapers are still popular among the readers due to easy accessibility. Most of the newspaper organizations in Malaysia have been operating for many years and their strong brand presence has influence on community. Most of the newspapers do have leisure contents and selective columns for the readers to choose. News stories in newspaper provide deeper information which a greater chance for understanding compares to radio and television. Newspaper is considered personal medium as the readers can use newspaper for a longer period of time.

One of the main reasons why users click the news stories in the star online Facebook page because they were interested in the article. This process encouraged the reader to interact with the article by clicking on the news link. The previous study suggested that readers may like or comment on the article posted as part of interaction method. People share and read news on Facebook mainly because they like to talk to others about what is happening in the current world (Hille and Bakker, 2013, 2014). The findings suggest that entertainment news was the most preferred news in Facebook. Such category of news gives the readers a sense of pleasure and fun compare to other types of news. Entertainment news comprises topics on latest movies, music and celebrity gossips. Posting entertainment news in Facebook is easier due to easy accessibility. The readers preferred to have light reading while on Facebook rather than discussing more complex issue. User's access to Facebook to read

entertainment news even the application is created to connect with friends. Bastos agreed that Facebook is prime venue for news article topics such as fashion, arts or entertainment and disseminate economy news are less suited and attract more young readers, thus making the other types of news infamous. This insight is clearly important for designers and content creators for any news organizations using social media tools to communicate with readers. The news should be related to entertainment topics to motivate the readers to click news stories in Facebook.

Past researches demonstrate the application of uses and gratifications theory to study the consumer's motivation in using social media. The present findings show that respondents join the star Facebook page to obtain information, contribute, socialize and entertainment with information seeking the main factor. Armstrong and McAdams (2011) findings is similar to the present study as information seeking purpose appears to encourage users to search for news. Also, Whiting and Williams (2013) found uses and gratification for social media as social interaction (88%), information seeking (80%), entertainment (64%) and expression of opinions (56%) and that social media can be engaged as self-education. Kamik *et al.* (2013) revealed that contribution, discovery, social interaction and entertainment to be the key gratifications factor for a media sharing group in Facebook. In the current study, under information seeking, most respondents chose 'I like the news article posted', 'I like to read comments by other users post' and 'I like reading comments posted by other user's which encouraged reader's participation in news sharing among their friends. Users who are engrossed in social media are likely to be more open to receiving news and information via their networked circles from both friends and the organization itself (Hermida *et al.*, 2012). The communication technologies have revolutionized our lives and the way we communicate. Park *et al.* (2009) findings show that users who seek information in Facebook are more likely to participate in civic activities. According to Hermida *et al.* (2012) social media is related to comfort with crowd-based information and its use by professional news organization.

### CONCLUSION

The findings of the study have some important theoretical and practical implication about the purpose of Facebook users reading news online. Overall, this study is valuable in that it outlines the uses and gratifications outcomes of a particular Facebook page. News organization could post improved articles in a sense where the readers can intellectually discuss and

communicate with readers according to needs. Social media is an emerging yet powerful tool for drawing young adult's attention to societal concerns and uniting the young generation as active participants in society. From a practitioner standpoint, this might suggest that news organization need to be different in their social media strategies. The messaging, approach and information provided may need to be presented in different approaches to reach the readers.

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