Beyond A Click: Gratifications Seeking from Facebook Interaction

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Abstract

The existence of social networking sites, especially Facebook, not only introduced a new method for the society to interact and socialize online, but it also provided a medium for the audiences to fulfil the needs of attaining information, sharing views and expressing emotions with virtual friends. Uses and gratifications theory explains that the audience will choose the medium that will gratify their needs. Previous studies on Facebook have mostly focused on youth, while studies pertaining to usage patterns among adult Facebook users still remain limited. Therefore, this study was conducted to identify adult users' activities on Facebook and the gratifications they seek. A total of 310 adult Facebook users in the Klang Valley were selected for this study. The study found that the majority of adult Facebook users visit the site between 2-4 times a day, and most were done via smartphones. The activity that was mainly carried out on Facebook is to wish their friends on their birthdays or festive celebrations. In terms of media gratification, the majority of adult Facebook users utilise it to keep themselves up-to-date with long-lost friends' development, following issues shared by virtual friends, and to give and receive moral support. Factor analysis that was done on media gratifications revealed

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three distinct typologies: emotional needs, information needs and moral support needs. The study also found that there was no difference between men and women in terms of using the media to meet the requirements based on the two typologies concerned. The study concludes on the findings that similar to other users, adults also use Facebook in order to meet their various needs. In addition, this study has successfully introduced a new typology – moral support needs – where Facebook users seek wisdom or advice from religious experts, as well as virtual friends who can help in strengthening their morale.

Keywords: *Facebook*, Uses and Gratification Theory, Emotional Needs, Information Needs, Moral Support Needs.

Bukan Sekadar Klik: Kepuasan Penggunaan daripada Interaksi di Facebook

Abstrak

Kewujudan laman sosial khususnya Facebook bukan sahaja memperkenalkan kaedah baharu kepada masyarakat untuk berinteraksi dan beramah mesra dalam talian, malah ia juga menjadi medium kepada khalayak untuk memenuhi keperluan mendapatkan maklumat, berkongsi pandangan dan meluahkan emosi dengan rakan maya. Teori kegunaan dan kepuasan menjelaskan bahawa penonton akan memilih medium yang akan memenuhi keperluan mereka. Kajian terdahulu di Facebook kebanyakannya tertumpu kepada belia, manakala kajian berkaitan corak penggunaan dalam kalangan pengguna Facebook dewasa masih terhad. Oleh itu, kajian ini dijalankan untuk mengenal pasti aktiviti pengguna dewasa di Facebook dan kepuasan yang mereka cari. Seramai 310 pengguna Facebook dewasa di Lembah Klang telah dipilih untuk kajian ini. Dapatan kajian mendapati majoriti pengguna Facebook dewasa melawat laman media sosial tersebut antara 2 hingga 4 kali sehari, dan kebanyakannya dilakukan melalui telefon pintar. Aktiviti yang kebanyakannya dijalankan di Facebook adalah mengucapkan selamat hari lahir atau menyampaikan ucapan sambutan sempena hari perayaan kepada rakan-rakan maya mereka. Dari segi kepuasan media, majoriti pengguna Facebook dewasa menggunakannya untuk memastikan diri mereka mendapat maklumat berkaitan perkembangan rakan yang telah lama hilang, mengikuti isu yang dikongsi oleh rakan maya, dan untuk memberi dan menerima sokongan moral. Analisis faktor yang dilakukan terhadap kepuasan media mendedahkan tiga tipologi yang berbeza: keperluan emosi, keperluan maklumat dan keperluan sokongan moral. Kajian juga mendapati tidak terdapat perbezaan antara lelaki dan wanita dari segi penggunaan media bagi memenuhi keperluan berdasarkan dua tipologi berkenaan. Kajian ini menyimpulkan hasil dapatan bahawa sama seperti pengguna lain, orang dewasa juga menggunakan Facebook untuk memenuhi pelbagai keperluan mereka. Selain itu, kajian ini telah berjaya memperkenalkan tipologi baharu – keperluan sokongan

moral – apabila pengguna Facebook mendapat penjelasan atau nasihat daripada pakar agama, serta rakan maya yang boleh membantu dalam mengukuhkan pekerti mereka.

Kata kunci: *Facebook, Teori Kegunaan dan Kepuasan, Keperluan Emosi, Keperluan Maklumat, Keperluan Sokongan Moral.*

Introduction

Introduced by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004, *Facebook* is a social networking website that not only provides a channel for the audience to interact with one another online but is also a place to share information with other users. Within just a few years of its creation, *Facebook* has become very popular and a hit among users. This is supported by the statistics of registered users that is increasing since its establishment. For reference, in 2015, there were 18 million *Facebook* users in Malaysia (Internet World Statistics, 2015) compared to 13.3 million in 2013. While *Facebook* remains the most popular social media site in Malaysia, the percentage of Internet users who use it has decreased from 97.3% in 2018 to 91.7% in 2020. Despite recent declines, it has proven to be a substantial social media site in terms of widespread usage, with *Facebook* users accounting for more than 90% of total Malaysian users.

The significant percentage of usage may be attributed to the use of smartphones, which provides a convenient and speedy platform for users to access social networking sites while they are on the go, with no time limitations. This is further reinforced by statistics issued by the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC), which show that in the third quarter of 2020, smartphone usage reached a near saturation level of 98.7% (MCMC, 2020).

Uses and gratifications theory explained that users of mass media know what they want from the media. Therefore, they are actively selecting and using media contents that can gratify their needs at a maximum level.

Statement of the Problem

The proliferation of social media has not only provided a new medium for people to interact with one another, but it is also a platform where people seek entertainment and information, establish social relationships, and communicate. According to a report published by Pew Research Center (2021), *Facebook*'s growth has flattened over the past five years, but it remains one of the most widely used social media sites among adults in the United States. About 69% of adults admit that they ever use *Facebook*, equal to the data collected in 2019.

The statistics issued by Internet World Stats (2022) show that there were almost 31 million registered *Facebook* users in Malaysia up to July 2022. This shows that the number of *Facebook* users has accumulated to 93.8% of Malaysia's overall population, making *Facebook* remains as a popular choice amongst social media users.

As a form of new media, more research has focused on *Facebook*, as well as other social media sites. However, previous studies have only looked at its usage amongst youth and adolescents (refer to Mondi, Woods & Rafi, 2007; Park, Kee, & Valenzuela, 2009; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008; Mansumitrchai, Park & Chiu, 2012; Mohd Zaidi & Bahiyah, 2013) as opposed to adult users, whose literacy rate in information technology (IT) have increased each year. It is essential to note that IT applications on smartphones have no doubt helped in increasing the number of social media users among adults.

This study was aimed at exploring and reviewing usage patterns amongst adult *Facebook* users through uses and gratifications theory. This is based on the premise that adult users use social media to gratify their needs, such as in seeking information, socializing, and meeting their affective needs. In addition, the significant number of *Facebook* users makes the study relevant.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are:
1. To identify the frequency of adult users' visits on *Facebook*.
2. To identify the frequency of adult users' activities on *Facebook* within a day.
3. To identify the media gratifications sought by adult users.
4. To identify whether there is a difference in media gratification sought between male and female users.

Literature Review

Uses and Gratification Theory
Elihu Katz, Jay G. Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch introduced uses and gratifications theory in 1974. This theory posits that audiences are active in selecting the media and content that they believe are able to meet all their needs (West & Turner, 2010). This is contrary to earlier theories, which argue, that mass media has so much power over its audiences, that it shapes their actions such as in magic bullet theory. In addition, mass media can also determine the issues that should be thought of and discussed by the audience as determined by media conglomerates, as explained in agenda-setting theory.

Uses and gratifications theory underwent an evolution and revolution due to additions and changes in typology based on new findings from the research community. Four typologies were introduced by McQuail in 1972 – surveillance, personal identity, diversion, and personal relationships (McQuail, 2010). Later, Rubin (1981) also highlighted nine typologies of media gratification sought by the audience - passing time, companionship, excitement, escape, enjoyment, social interaction, relaxation, obtaining information, and learning about a specific content (quoted in West & Turner, 2010).

Since then, diverse interpretations in various studies by communication and mass media scholars have also contributed to its development (such as Palmgreen, 1984; Katz et al, 1973; and other scholars) (quoted in Miller, 2005), including the existence of new forms of media that is in

line with technological developments – such as the Internet and social media. A summary of selected uses and gratifications typologies can be observed in Table 1.

Table 1: Uses and Gratifications Typologies

Researcher	Reasons for Media Use
McQuail, et al. (1972)	Personal relationships Diversion Surveillance Personal identity
Greenberg (1974)	Companionship Passing time Habit Escape Learning Arousal Relaxation
Rubin (1977)	Companionship Passing time Habit Escape Learning Arousal Relaxation
Palmgreen & Rayburn (1979)	Companionship Passing time Forgetting Entertainment Learning about things Communication utility Relaxing
Rubin (1983)	Companionship Pass time Habit Escape Entertainment Social interaction Information Arousal Relaxation

Source: West & Turner, 2010

Although the typologies are mostly associated with television usage, researchers discovered that some of the reasons for media use could also be applied to new forms of media. The proliferation of social media

has prompted researchers to conduct studies relating to the medium and gratifications sought by audiences. Those research have revealed gratifications typology, such as relaxing entertainment, expressive information sharing, escapism, cool and new trend, companionship, professional advancement, social interaction, habitual pass time and meeting new people (see Smock, Ellison, Lampe, & Wohn, 2011). Additional research has introduced new gratifications typologies such as expressive information sharing, cool and new trends, professional advancement, and meeting new people. This corresponds to the nature of new media – interactivity – whereby audiences can interact with one another in real-time. Moreover, this virtual world provides a space for users to share and disseminate information received by other parties without restrictions and boundaries.

Essentially, there are many reasons why a medium is favoured to meet an audience's needs. Thus, the uses and gratifications theory is fitting to be the basis of research that aims to identify adults' motivations in using *Facebook*. Compared to traditional media, where media practitioners act as determinants and content providers for the audiences, new media such as *Facebook* is found to have features that are inherently different – whereby audiences act as content providers and hence distribute it to their *Facebook* friends. They have the power to determine the information needed to fulfil their cognitive, affective, and social needs. In addition, social media users can also filter out unwanted content by being their own gatekeepers. This indicates that the audience now has control over the information or news they need on *Facebook*, as well as able to gratify their needs by sharing useful information with their online friends.

Facebook Usage among Users

Although statistics show that young people are the majority users of social media, the number of adult users is still considered significant. Compared to young users, most adults are employed, making it easy for them to own a smartphone and subscribe to Internet data plan that enables them to access social media. This advantage allows them to update their walls on social networking sites as well as to view information or images posted by their online friends regardless of time and place.

This indicates that social media has become a platform to conduct many activities such as sharing information, pictures, and videos, express their thoughts, comments or opinions, as well as online shopping.

Past studies on the use of *Facebook* among young people revealed that most preferred activities include commenting on walls, uploading photos and self or family profiles, uploading videos, sending messages, playing online games on *Facebook*, updating status on walls (Watkins & Lee, 2010; Norhazlina et al. 2011), creating events and chatting (Norhazlina et al. 2011).

The time spent in using *Facebook* also determines the type of activities that will be carried out, as well as the number of their *Facebook* friends. Additionally, Mohd Zaidi and Bahiyah (2003) assert that users who are categorized as hardcore *Facebook* users spend more time on *Facebook* than other users. Their study on students of Universiti Sains Malaysia found that users spend about one to 20 hours a week on *Facebook* (Mean=17.73). A study conducted by Norhazlina et al. (2011) on students from three schools in Petaling Jaya Selatan revealed that the majority of male *Facebook* users spend between 30 minutes to an hour, while female users spend between one to three hours browsing the site on a school day. Thus, Norhazlina's study revealed that females were avid users of *Facebook* in comparison to her male counterpart.

Another study conducted by Azian (2010) on adult *Facebook* users focused on another aspect, which is to measure weekly frequency visits and not on the amount of time spent using *Facebook*. The study also found that the majority of users frequent the site more than 10 times a week. It also found that some of the activities done on *Facebook* include sharing photos and videos, discussing economic matters, family, education, interests, and socializing with friends.

Clearly, audiences have their preferred activities on *Facebook*, and they also spend a lot of time doing various activities on the social

networking site. In conclusion, social networking sites such as *Facebook* have become a new platform for people, regardless of age and social background, to fulfil various needs with only one click.

Media Gratifications through Facebook

In line with the views of scholars who have stated that audiences are actively looking for media that can gratify them, thus the existence of *Facebook* has provided an excellent opportunity for them to fully utilise the medium to meet their needs. The emergence of new media has also expanded research relating to the purposes of why users use certain mediums. For instance, a study conducted by Norhazlina et al. (2011) discovered that students use *Facebook* to attain information, find new contacts, as well as to communicate with friends and family members.

Interestingly, an additional study led by Mohd Zaidi and Bahiyah (2013) showed that the gratifications sought by university students on *Facebook* include maintaining social relationships, participating in online communities, companionship, entertainment, and obtaining information. Meanwhile, Zhang et al. (2011) reported that some of the gratifications sought by *Facebook* users include obtaining social information, recognition, to get more friends, entertainment, networking and to seek emotional support.

Park et al. (2009) stated that some of the gratifications sought by college students comprise of seeking information about campus activities, to socialize, to find oneself, and to be entertained. The same study also found that *Facebook* is able to provide more in gratifying audiences in comparison to traditional media, as it allows for online social relationships and participation in online communities.

A study by Bumgarner (2007) claimed that adult users use *Facebook*, particularly as a channel for socialisation (e.g. gossiping) purpose. In addition, entertainment element is also another important gratification

that they were looking for from *Facebook*. Thus, *Facebook* provides an interactive avenue for users to fulfil their array of needs – be it cognitive, affective or behavioural.

Differences of gratification sought by male and female Facebook users

Previous studies have shown that there are differences between male and female *Facebook* users when it comes to gratifications sought through the medium. Parks and Floyd (1996) found that women are more likely to use cyberspace to enhance interpersonal relationships as opposed to men. This is further supported by Sheldon (2008) who observed that female users tend to use *Facebook* to maintain established friendships. In addition, they also use *Facebook* to keep themselves entertained and reduce boredom. Men, on the other hand, prefer to use *Facebook* to seek new contacts and establish new relationships with them (Sheldon, 2008).

Based on the findings of previous studies, media gratifications sought by *Facebook* users can be differentiated according to gender, making it a hypothesis that will be tested in this study. The hypotheses are as follows:

H1: There is a significant difference in using *Facebook* to gratify emotional needs between male and female users.

H2: There is a significant difference in using *Facebook* to gratify information needs between male and female users.

Research Methodology

A cross-sectional survey using a set of questionnaires was performed on a total of 310 adult *Facebook* users (aged 26 years and above) in the Klang Valley. A total of 20 items were designed to measure the frequency of adult *Facebook* users' activities on *Facebook* in the last week. The frequency of activities was measured using a 5-point scale of 1 (never), 2 (occasionally – about one to three times a week), 3 (rare – about four to six times a week), 4 (often – between six to eight times a week) and

5 (very often – more than eight times a week). The researchers then analysed the averages of *Facebook* usage for the users concerned, and the mean shows a high frequency of respondents doing such activities on *Facebook*.

To measure media gratification, a 5-point Likert scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was used. Eighteen items were designed to measure the satisfaction sought by adult users through *Facebook*. To test the hypothesis according to gender, the researchers calculated the items score in measuring the gratifications concerned. A high score indicates that the gratifications were indeed sought after by users when using the application.

Additionally, the researchers also performed a principal component factor analysis procedure with varimax rotation to identify the constructs for media gratifications.

Research Findings

Demographic Information

The majority of respondents were female (51.3%), with the rest being male (48.7%). A total of 57.7% of respondents were between the ages of 26 – 30 years old, followed by those aged between 31 – 35 years (13.2%). More than 87% of respondents were Malay, followed by Chinese (5.5%), Indian, and others at 3.5% respectively. Almost 43% of respondents have a monthly income of between RM2,000 – 4000. The majority (45.5%) of respondents consisted of professionals, and 39% consisted of non-professionals. Meanwhile, 22% of respondents earn less than RM2,000 a month. Almost 52% of respondents were married, followed by those who were single (45.8%). Most respondents (53.2%) do not have children, and 22.6% have between one to two children.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to demography (n = 310)

Variables	Number of respondents	Percentage
Gender:		
Male	151	48.7
Female	159	51.3
Age:		
26-30 Years Old	179	57.7
31-35 Years Old	41	13.2
36-40 Years Old	30	9.7
41-45 Years Old	37	11.9
More Than 45 Years Old	23	7.4
Race:		
Malay	271	87.4
Chinese	17	5.5
Indian	11	3.5
Others	11	3.5
Monthly Income:		
None	22	7.1
Less than RM2000	71	22.9
RM2000-RM4000	133	42.9
RM4001-RM6000	63	20.3
More than RM6000	21	6.8
Profession:		
Professional	141	45.5
Non-Professional	121	39.0
Self-employed	24	7.7
Not working	24	7.7
Marital Status:		
Single	142	45.8
Married	161	51.9
Divorced/Widow/Widower	7	2.3
Number of children:		
None	165	53.2
1-2	70	22.6
3-4	53	17.1
More than 4	22	7.1

Medium used to access Facebook

Table 3 shows that smartphone is the medium most frequently used by users to gain access to *Facebook*, with 51.6%, followed by desktop/ mobile phones (33.9%) and tablets (14.5%).

Table 3: Medium used access *Facebook* (n = 310)

Medium most frequently used to access Facebook	Number of respondents	Percentage
Desktop computer/laptop	105	33.9
Tablet	45	14.5
Smartphone	160	51.6
Total	310	100

Frequency of Facebook usage within a day

Table 4 shows the frequency of adult users' *Facebook* usage in a day. A majority of users (41.6%) visit *Facebook* between 2 to 4 times in a day, followed by those who visit *Facebook* once a day (29.7%). The study also found that there are also those who visit *Facebook* more than 5 times a day (28.7%).

Table 4: Frequency of adult users' *Facebook* usage within a day (n = 310)

Frequency of accessing Facebook	Number of respondents	Percentage
Once per day	92	29.7
2-4 times daily	129	41.6
5-7 times daily	58	18.7
More than 8 times a day	31	10.0
Total	310	100.0

Facebook activities among adult users

In order to identify the different types of activities performed by adults on *Facebook* in the time span of a week, 20 options were listed, as shown in Table 5. The activity most performed by adults on *Facebook* is wishing friends on their birthday/wedding/anniversary/festive celebrations which are performed about 6 to 8 times a week, yielding the highest percentage at 36.8%. Similarly, following friends' news feeds is done about 6 to 8 times a week (35.5%), replying to friends' comments is done about 4 to 6 times a week (32.6%), and commenting on friends' walls is done about 4 to 6 times a week (32.3%). Chatting was also done quite frequently, followed by sharing information from friends' walls whereby the frequency of such activities is between 4 to 6 times a week (32.3%).

Table 5: Frequency of *Facebook* activities by adult users

Activities	Never	1-3 times a week	4-6 times a week	6-8 times a week	More than 8 times a week
1. Updating own/family activities on Facebook wall	28 (9)	99 (31.9)	76 (24.5)	82 (26.5)	25 (8.1)
2. Sharing information from friends' walls	25 (8.1)	75 (24.2)	100 (32.3)	83 (26.8)	27 (8.7)
3. Updating pictures of own activities	31 (10)	88 (28.4)	94 (30.3)	77 (24.8)	20 (6.5)
4. Searching for long-lost friends	28 (9)	85 (27.4)	95 (30.6)	78 (25.2)	24 (7.7)
5. Searching for new friends	64 (20.6)	91 (29.4)	74 (23.9)	69 (22.3)	12 (3.9)
6. Commenting on friends' walls	17 (5.5)	67 (21.6)	100 (32.3)	97 (31.3)	29 (9.4)
7. Sharing music/video/films	53 (17.1)	83 (26.8)	95 (30.6)	58 (18.7)	21 (6.8)
8. Sharing pictures with friends	28 (9)	86 (27.2)	96 (31)	85 (27.4)	15 (4.8)
9. Chatting	25 (8.1)	78 (25.2)	88 (28.4)	91 (29.4)	28 (9)
10. Sending a private message	43 (13.9)	80 (25.80	92 (29.7)	65 (21)	30 (9.7)
11. Creating groups to discuss certain issues	71 (22.9)	84 (27.1)	79 (25.5)	57 (18.4)	19 (6.1)
12. Replying friends' comments	11 (3.5)	71 (22.9)	101 (32.6)	99 (31.9)	28 (9)
13. Wishing friends on their birthday/wedding/anniversary/festive celebrations	8 (2.6)	57 (18.4)	87 (28.1)	114 (36.8)	44 (14.2)
14. Sharing advice/motivations from experts/religious teachers/friends	36 (11.6)	78 (25.2)	90 (29)	78 (25.2)	28 (9)
15. Following friends' news feed	14 (4.5)	58 (18.7)	78 (25.2)	110 (35.5)	50 (16.1)
16. Promoting goods/services	158 (51)	53 (17.1)	41 (13.2)	41 (13.2)	17 (5.5)
17. Purchasing goods	151 (48.7)	63 (20.3)	50 (16.1)	42 (13.5)	4 (1.3)
18. Playing online games	133 (42.9)	55 (17.7)	59 (19)	40 (12.9)	23 (7.4)
19. Monitoring children's Facebook activities	197 (63.5)	31 (10)	35 (11.3)	12 (12.3)	9 (2.9)
20. Marketing products and goods	183 (59)	40 (12.9)	40 (12.9)	28 (9)	19 (6.1)

Note: Figures in parentheses refer to percentages.

Media gratifications sought by adult users on Facebook

Table 6 shows the distribution of mean and frequency for the types of gratifications sought and obtained by adult *Facebook* users through various activities. The mean shown for 18 items are between 2.66 and 3.75 (more than the average of 2.5).

The items which shows a high value of mean (3.0 and more) include utilizing *Facebook* 'to keep up with long-lost friends' (M=3.75, SD=0.88), followed by 'to keep up with current issues shared by friends' (M=3.64, SD=0.97), 'to exchange information with friends' (M=3.57, SD=0.98), 'to seek information relating to a matter/issue' (M=3.49, SD=1.11), 'to share information/knowledge with friends' (M=3.45, SD=1.08), 'to provide moral support to friends who are facing life difficulties' (M=3.38, SD=1.10), 'to share advice with friends' (M=3.36, SD=1.10), 'to eliminate stress' (M=3.21, SD=1.16), and 'to share life successes with friends' (M=3.30, SD =1.08). The significant mean value indicates that the majority of respondents strongly agree or agree with the statements depicting the gratifications sought by adults on *Facebook*.

Table 6: Mean and standard deviation of media gratifications sought on Facebook

Media Gratifications Utilizing Facebook for/to:	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
1. Eliminate stress	3.31	1.16
2. Eliminate loneliness	3.28	1.14
3. Keep up with long-lost friends	3.75	0.88
4. Share life difficulties with friends	2.87	1.15
5. Escape from problems	2.66	1.23
6. Communicate with friends	2.96	1.16
7. Express dissatisfaction about something or someone	2.69	1.19
8. Seek information relating to a matter/issue	3.49	1.06

9. Keep up with current issues shared by friends	3.64	0.97
10. Discuss issues on Facebook	3.11	1.20
11. Exchange information with friends	3.57	0.98
12. Make a stand regarding an issue	3.26	1.06
13. Provide moral support to friends who are facing life difficulties	3.38	1.10
14. Increase self-motivation by reading advice on friends' walls	3.21	1.10
15. Share life successes with friends	3.30	1.08
16. Share information/knowledge with friends	3.45	1.08
17. Share daily activities with friends	3.22	1.15
18. Share advice with friends	3.36	1.10

Analysing factors of media gratification

Principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation was done on 18 items, in which three factors or constructs were successfully identified. The measure of sampling adequacy by Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) is 0.932 and above 0.60, therefore all the items are suitable to run the factor analysis. In addition, Bartlett's test of sphericity to identify whether the correlation between items is adequate to run factor analysis was also shown a significant result, $p < 0.05$. Only items that have a loading factor greater than 0.5 were selected to be categorized in respective factors.

The first factor was labelled emotional needs (eigenvalue = 8.90). The eight items for these factors accounted for 26.85% of the total variance, with high reliability at 0.912. This factor explains that *Facebook* users use the site to fulfil their emotional needs.

The second factor is moral support needs (eigenvalue = 1.62), in which there are six items that represent a total of 21.56% of the total variance, with a reliability of 0.886. This factor describes that users use *Facebook* to gain moral support or to give moral support to friends via content sharing. This includes words of wisdom, advice and motivations from experts or religious teachers.

The third factor is labelled as information needs (eigenvalue = 1.15) and there are four items that represent 16.43% of the total variance. Reliability is also high at 0.816. This shows that audiences use *Facebook* to fulfil their need for obtaining various types of information (see table 7).

Table 7: Factors leading to *Facebook* gratification

Items	**Loading**	**Eigenvalue**	**Variance**	**Cronbach alpha**
Factor 1: Emotional needs (Mean=3.01, SD=0.91)		**8.90**	**26.85%**	**0.912**
Eliminate stress	0.78			
Eliminate loneliness	0.77			
Sharing problems with friends	0.74			
Forgetting the problems faced	0.77			
Needing friends to talk to	0.71			
Able to express dissatisfaction about something or someone	0.73			
Discussing issues on Facebook with friends	0.51			
Sharing daily activities with friends	0.66			
Factor 2: Moral support needs (Mean=3.33, SD=0.86)		**1.62**	**21.56%**	**0.886**
To take a stand regarding an issue	0.57			
To give moral support to a friend who is facing problems	0.64			
To motivate self by reading advice on friends' statuses/walls	0.77			
To share accomplishments with friends	0.80			
To share knowledge with friends	0.75			
To share words of advice with friends	0.65			
Factor 3: Information needs (M=3.62, SD=0.78)		**1.15**	**16.43%**	**0.816**
To keep up with long-lost friends' activities	0.65			
To attain information	0.78			
To keep self-updated on current issues shared by friends	0.80			
To exchange information with friends	0.60			

Differences in gratifications sought by male and female Facebook users

To test the hypothesis according to gender concerning the gratifications sought, two independent sample t-test were applied.

The following hypotheses were tested:

H_1: There is a significant difference in using *Facebook* to gratify emotional needs between male and female users.
H_2: There is a significant difference in using *Facebook* to gratify information needs between male and female users.

Table 8 shows that there were indeed no significant differences between male and female users for all two types of gratifications sought [emotional needs: t(308) = -0.628, p>0.05); and information needs: t(308) = -0.314, p>0.05)]. In addition, the mean value for male and female users for all two factors did not differ significantly. This shows that the gratifications sought by male and female adult *Facebook* users were the same.

Table 8: Differences of gratifications sought by male and female

Gratification	Male (Mean)	Female (Mean)	t-value	df	Significance value
Emotional needs	4.80	4.90	-0.628	308	0.531
Information needs	2.88	2.85	-0.314	308	0.754

p > 0.05

Discussion of the findings

Facebook remains the most popular social networking site in comparison to other social media sites especially among adult users aged from 34 to 45 years (Hootsuite.com, 2023). This study attempted to explore the patterns of *Facebook* usage among adults.

The findings of the study indicate that most adult users prefer to use phones as the main device to access their *Facebook* pages. This is also due to the fact that they are financially stable and are able to buy smartphones compared to teenagers who still rely on financial resources from their parents. Additionally, Internet adult users (aged 30 to 60 years and above) in Malaysia accounted for 44.3%, as reported by MCMC (2020) also contributed to the popularity of *Facebook*.

Generally, adult users access *Facebook* between 2 to 4 times in a day, which is significantly less than teenagers. Yet, there are those who access *Facebook* between 5 to 7 times or 8 times in a day. These can be categorized as hardcore users and present signs of being addicted to *Facebook*. However, this study did not question how many hours are spent every time adults visit the site. The main activities performed by adult *Facebook* users include wishing friends on their birthday/ wedding/anniversary/festive celebrations, following friends' news feeds and replying friends' comments. Others include commenting on friends' walls, chatting and sharing information from friends' walls. A detailed study would show that there is very little difference when it comes to activities performed by adults and young adults.

Past studies (Watkins & Lee, 2010; Norhazlina et al., 2011; Ryan et al., 2014; Wenjing & Karan, 2019) detailed some of the most popular activities carried out on *Facebook* by young adults or teenagers, and they include uploading videos and participating in online games. In this study, it is found that adult users are most likely to perform age-appropriate activities that are in line with their maturity, whereby they prefer to greet and congratulate, as well as comment and share information with their *Facebook* friends. This shows that the new media has provided audiences with an opportunity to produce media contents for their own use, as well as the ability to share it with others. In other words, they are content providers who can determine messages that can be shared with friends on social media.

This study is also aimed at identifying the gratifications sought by adults today. According to uses and gratifications theory, the audiences will choose or seek the media that can fulfil their needs and requirements of surveillance, personal identity, diversion, and personal relationships.

An analysis of the data collected indicates that most items showed a high level of mean at 3.00 on a scale of 5.00. This suggests that adult *Facebook* users believe they are able to gratify their needs by using *Facebook*. In this discussion, the researchers only listed items with an average of 3.30 or more, including utilizing *Facebook* to keep up with long-lost friends, to keep up with current issues shared by friends, to exchange information with friends, to seek information relating to a matter/issue, to share information/knowledge with friends, to provide moral support to friends who are facing life difficulties, to share advice with friends, to eliminate stress and to share life successes with friends.

Based on the gratifications sought on *Facebook* among adult users, it is clear that many utilise the medium to fulfil various needs – social, informational and moral support. This includes providing moral support by motivating friends who are facing problems. Moreover, they also share positive messages and knowledge retrieved from religious experts so that friends can also benefit from the message. The gratifications sought are in line with adults' maturity and positivity. It is also important to note that the results of this study do not bear significance difference when compared to previous studies that were done on teenagers and university students who use *Facebook* to socialize and be entertained (Mohd Zaidi & Bahiyah, 2013; Zhang et al., 2011). Furthermore, in comparison to traditional media, *Facebook* provides a certain uniqueness whereby audiences can choose and create contents that are age-appropriate to share with their friends, and that they believe will gratify their needs.

Hypothesis testing to measure the differences between gratifications sought by male and female *Facebook* yielded no significant difference. The results of this study are inconsistent with the ones conducted by

Sheldon (2008) and Parks and Floyd (1996), which found that there were significant differences between the two sexes when dealing with motivations for using the cyberspace. This indicates that adult users in Malaysia use social networking sites such as *Facebook* to fulfil their needs to obtain information and to express emotions, as well as to provide moral support to friends by sharing words of encouragement and motivations – whether self-created or those shared by *Facebook* friends regardless of their gender.

The study has also highlighted three important media gratification factors sought by audiences when they are active on social media. The three factors are emotional needs, moral support needs and information needs. Emotional needs are sought by audiences of all ages, regardless of the types of media used – traditional media like television, magazines, radio or new media with various applications. At one time, audiences utilised the media to eliminate stress or boredom by watching television or listening to the radio. Now, with the new media, they can easily produce materials that are entertaining, and that can be shared with their online friends regardless of the time limit and geographic distance.

The same could also be said about information needs. It cannot be denied that netizens use social media to share various types of information, whether it is current issues, health information, politics, society and others. In fact, information concerning business items is also shared on social networking sites. Therefore, information seeking among social media users is not out of the norm. Regardless of traditional or new media, the media's role is to provide information for audiences. Thus, audiences can select the types of media that they believe can gratify their needs. When discussing the uses and gratifications theory, both factors are similar to the typologies that had been introduced by previous scholars (refer to Smock et al., 2011).

It is also worth mentioning that the researchers have successfully introduced a new typology – moral support needs – which is different when compared to the typologies adopted or introduced by previous scholars in their research. For adult users, whose maturity level is considerably higher than young people, the gratification they seek is more on the spiritual side – as giving moral support to others will satisfy them spiritually. This is due to the researchers' study on social media, where audiences have a variety of options when it comes to gratifying their needs. In addition, various groups have come to realise the potential of social media – the amount and variety of content can be made viral without geographical restrictions and time limitations compared to traditional media – and that is advantageous.

Conclusion

This study provides a clear picture regarding *Facebook* usage patterns among adults. New media provides a platform for audiences to gratify diverse needs, whether it is entertainment, emotional or informational. The existence of various gadgets, like smartphones or tablets, has also helped in providing quick access in fulfilling users' various needs. In addition to emotional needs and information needs, researchers have also introduced a new typology for uses and gratifications theory, namely moral support needs to explain gratifications sought by *Facebook* users. Clearly, this study has pioneered a new frontier in research, pertaining to the dynamics of social media usage for the future.

Implications of the study

Studies on uses and gratifications theory conducted by previous communication scholars have focused on how audiences used traditional media such as television; whereby media practitioners provide contents and audiences choose ones that will gratify them. Therefore, the audience does not have the absolute power in determining the contents needed to gratify them. This phenomenon has changed drastically once the new media is being utilised in a large scale, including the use of social networking sites. Now, the audiences have the opportunity and can freely

determine the contents that they want to convey or share with their friends on social networking sites. They can produce their own contents, modify the contents of traditional media into a new form or share contents that they feel is appropriate with others. Thus, this study has successfully highlighted a new element or typology for uses and gratifications theory, which is moral support needs. Audiences tend to seek contents that will uplift their spirit or morale, and they are satisfied when those contents can be shared with friends in their social network. This includes motivation and advice to those who may be facing challenges in their lives. This element is an additional value to the theory, which is often discussed in line with advancements in media technology. The new typology can be tested on audiences within a range of different scopes, such as age, gender, education level and racial groups to further strengthen the study of uses and gratifications theory in social networking.

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