

Review of Literature on the Media Uses and Gratifications Derived By Students of Higher Education in India



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Abstract: *This study is a brief review of the literature on the media uses and gratification among students of higher education in India. With the proliferation of social media and the pandemic-induced lockdown of the past two years, it is important to understand – how students use social media, seek and gain gratification from it, because with the proliferation of large number of social media networking sites and the magnitude of traffic that it generates, brands today put a significant weightage on promotions via these channels as the engagement metrics of these particular sites are new currencies of today's connected world. The demography, 'College going students' was specifically chosen as they are consumers of tomorrow and their buying behaviour pattern will direct and shape the dimensions of future markets. The area of focus for this study was to review the published literature on the uses and gratifications of Media (specifically social media) uses among college going students through the lens of the 'Uses and gratification' theory. What are the gratifications sought and gratifications obtained through Social Networking Sites (hereinafter SNS)? Why people choose specific site/ service for a particular desire to be fulfilled? Why the internet – a great platform for searching and sharing information, is being utilized by college students primarily for communication and social networking activities rather than for the academic purposes? How the gratifications sought differ between males and females? What are the major motivations and needs for the consumers, belonging to demography stated above, to join SNS? The difference in treatment and the gratification sought from professional SNS like 'LinkedIn' and if there are any improvements or increase in efficiency in learning process due to incorporation of SNS in academics?*

The review found that Students prefer to spend more time online communicating and socialising using internet resources than devoting it for academic pursuits. Why people are so enamoured with social media is explained by its "user-friendly" and "let users manage" features as well as its user-generated material. Higher education students want to be involved in their communities; therefore, they seek out to their peer network in an effort to do so. Social fulfilment leads to adoption. College students use and built social capital on different social media platforms for gratification of their various desires. The gratifications sought and obtained varies from platform to platform.

Keywords: *Higher Education, Media Uses and Gratifications, India, Literature Review*

I. INTRODUCTION

The number of social media users in India has been steadily increasing due to the widespread use of internet connectivity. This expansion has also been significantly aided by the Digital India programme, which is supported by the Indian government. 2020, when the Covid-19 pandemic hit, saw a lot of people turn to social media to get information or express themselves, and various new topics and conversations started trending on social media in India. Digital ad spending increased as the number of social media users climbed. According to data, India's social media usage is continuing to expand and exhibit a variety of tendencies. Both urban and rural areas had seen a growth in the number of internet users over time. India is, behind China, the second-largest online market. There were around 639 million active internet users in India in 2020. The majority of internet users in India use their mobile phones, choosing inexpensive alternatives to pricey broadband and Wi-Fi connections that need for a PC, laptop, and other hardware. With an average monthly data consumption of 11 gigabits (GB), India has the highest data consumption rates worldwide, surpassing countries like China, the US, France, and others.

Due to the accessibility of the internet, India had 330 million active social media users as of 2019, and by 2023, that figure is projected to rise to 448 million. India has 290 million active social media users who utilise mobile devices to access social networks. India has a 27.1-year-old median age. The biggest users of social media in India are Millennials and Generation Z. Millennials account for 52.3 percent of social media results. Gen Z accounts for 28.4% of social media talks while people aged 35 to 44 make up 15.1%. Online video viewing is done by 97% of Indians with access to the internet. Going by the trends and these humongous figures, it is imperative to understand that what social media offers to consumers that people across demographics and specially the youngsters flock in colossal numbers to SNS (Social media networking sites). Since SNS today generate huge traffic, the brands across all sectors are focusing very strongly to build and expand their presence on these platforms as the engagement generation here translates into great sales figures. For any Marketing professional it is very crucial to understand the behaviour pattern of consumers on SNS and specifically the young age consumers (who are currently college going students), as they are the buyers of tomorrow that what are their gratifications and desires that SNS satisfy?

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A broad understanding of the same will help marketers to come up with solutions for the manifested or latent needs of customers.

II. USES AND GRATIFICATIONS THEORY

According to the "Uses and gratifications" theory, people utilise media to satisfy particular needs and wants. Uses and gratifications sees users as active agents who have control over their media consumption, in contrast to many media theories that perceive users as passive recipients of media, say Saluni, O., & Muchaonyerwa, N. (2002,[10])

- People are described in Uses and Gratifications as driven and active in the media they choose to consume.
- The hypothesis is based on two tenets: media consumers actively choose the media they watch, and they are conscious of the factors influencing their choices.
- In particular with relation to social media, the increased control and choice provided by new media have created new study opportunities for uses and gratifications research and led to the discovery of new gratifications.

Once, the foundation of the above stated theory is laid down properly, it imperative to ask questions like: What are the gratifications sought and gratifications obtained through Social Networking Sites (hereinafter SNS)? Why people choose specific site/ service for a particular desire to be fulfilled? Why the internet – a great platform for searching and sharing information, is being utilized by college students primarily for communication and social networking activities rather than for the academic purposes? How the gratifications sought differ between males and females? What are the major motivations and needs for the consumers, belonging to demography stated above, to join SNS? The difference in treatment and the gratification sought from professional SNS like 'LinkedIn' and if there are any improvements or increase in efficiency in learning process due to incorporation of SNS in academics?

This paper asks the above questions with relation to the Media uses and gratification among college going students.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

The way social media has changed customers from being passive listeners of corporate messaging to active contributors of their online creations, it has made a significant impact on all areas of the economy. Organizations spend an estimated \$60 billion annually on efforts to use the medium to persuade and sway people. The ability to track consumer participation in a variety of ways is one of the reasons social media has been so successful and has seen such a rapid rise. Web 2.0 allows us to track how, why, and where money is spent in connection to a given campaign, unlike print media advertising, where it has historically been challenging to assess the impact of a campaign. But with a better grasp of how people actually interact with the medium, could it be used even more successfully?

The Uses and Gratification theory helps in improving understanding of how people actually engage with the medium. The researchers establish ten themes of uses and gratifications that individuals attribute to social media based on their analysis of the literature on the uses and gratification of the internet. Some of these include: social interaction,

information seeking, entertainment, expression of opinions, etc. Khodabandelou, R., Karimi, L., Ehsani, M., & Ahmad, M. (2014,[5]) in their research paper refer to and clarify that their motivations to consume media are derived from five specific needs: (a) Cognitive needs which is related to "strengthening information, knowledge, and understanding"; (b) Affective needs that is related to "strengthening aesthetic, pleasurable and emotional experience" (c) Integrative needs which is to "strengthening credibility, confidence, stability, and status" (d) Social integrative needs which relates to "strengthening contact with family, friends, and the world" and (e) Escape or tension release needs which helps to escape or release tension from society and self. In the same paper, researchers highlight the practice and logic of repeated use of SNSs by stating to a reference, gratifications obtained are a better predictor of media use than gratifications sought and that if a medium meets or exceeds the gratifications sought by a user, recurrent use will occur. Specifically focusing on the young users who are most likely college students, it is discovered that their motivations and needs to consume SNS are quite well defined within their perspectives. University students' perceptions on communication features and practices in current typical social media such as Facebook are centred on information sharing, self-presentation, and opinion expression. Such research results suggest that college students' positive perceptions on social media as communication tools positively affect their active use of social media and developed their social capital via social media. The study of college students' motivations for their Facebook use found that entertainment, relationship maintenance, self-expression, and communication (including impression management) are the main motivations for using it. (Ha, L., Joa, C. Y., Gabay, I., & Kim, K. ,2018,[4]).

Furthermore, among these SNSs, there is difference in treatment and use of platforms. College students tend to show their inclination towards sites like Facebook, My space and Instagram in comparison with professional sites like LinkedIn. When specifically examining Facebook and MySpace, very popular U&G for having either account included to keep in touch with old friends, to keep in touch with current friends, to post/look at pictures, to make new friends, and to locate old friends. Less commonly reported uses and gratifications included to learn about events, to post social functions, to feel connected, to share information about yourself, and about academic and dating purposes. Nurturing or maintaining existing relationships has been the most mentioned motivation for using Facebook, the seeking new ones also has been a frequently mentioned objective for using Facebook (Cole & Swartz (2019, [2]) Whereas for professional SNS like LinkedIn, there are some misconceived notions among college students like; LinkedIn can only be joined after graduation and it's also possible that non-users won't be as motivated to join LinkedIn if it isn't realised that it can meet their want for professional knowledge. Though there are majority of users to fully understand and utilize the platform's feature and consider it a great source to build network & contacts but that represents a lesser population in contrast to the fan club that sites like Facebook and Instagram have. The emerging career advancement category is unique to LinkedIn, a professional network.



It is not characteristic of SNSs, as students rarely engage in career advancement activities on Facebook or MySpace. This signifies one of the key differences between professional and social networks in terms of uses and gratifications. Florenthal, B. (2015,[3]).

According to Whiting and Williams (2013,[13]), another prominent factor that to be taken into consideration is the incorporation of SNS in academics to check whether it enhances the learning process and also to check how it influences students to get diverted from their studies. It is quite evident that one can witness a division of opinions into two sects; one block that strongly put forwards the points that parallel use of SNS in academics does more harm than improving efficiency as it takes away students' interest from the college activities and to some extent also promote unethical practice of cheating in evaluations. Here also comes an interesting observation where it is emphasised that social media consumption affects the readership of school e-mails and involvement in campus activities. If students' attention online only focuses on other online media such as social media or text messages rather than school e-mails, then they would miss out important notices and information that they need in order to do well in college, and they would not take advantage of the opportunities offered by their college.

If their social media use is taking away their interest from campus activities rather than facilitating integration with the campus, people can expect their campus involvement to be low, which can negatively affect their college experience and the sense of belonging to their college Feller and Nagle (2016,[1]). argue that today's college students are accustomed to using technology, so they anticipate that it will play a significant role in their education. Zachos, G. (2018, [12]) in his review of social media use in higher education, mentions how students get engaged in meaningful discussions with references to relevant examples and events unfolding without much input from the instructor. Students mostly held and sustained class discussions rather than the traditional one-way information push from the instructor that "becomes boring relatively quickly, no matter how interactive an attempt employed". Woods, Taylor and Dumas (2019,[11]) gave a detailed account on the usage of media, gratifications sought & obtained through UGT among college going students and documented them well in order to establish the reasons that attract people to join SNS. Along with this, a exposure of contrasting views points regarding the applications of SNS in academics is also provided which broadens the scope of debate & discussion pertaining to the same.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To develop an understanding of Media uses and gratification among college going students for exploration of consumers' behavioural pattern on social media networking sites.

To explore, what are the gratifications sought and gratifications obtained through Social Networking Sites among college going students?

To comprehend and analyse the pattern of consumers for using specific SNS to satisfy particular gratifications.

To discover is there are any improvements or increase in efficiency in learning process due to incorporation of SNS in academics?

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Compared to academic pursuits, undergraduate students spend more time online communicating and socialising. This was reiterated in the focus group discussion as well. Participants in the focus groups reported that they used social media more on the Internet. Students could interpret school emails as work, hence they tend to avoid checking mails regularly, though it also is an important aspect of SNS. Another factor contributing to student email avoidance can be the prevalence of unwanted commercial emails aimed at selling to them, either with or without their consent.

Higher education students want to be involved in their communities; therefore, they seek out to their peer network in an effort to do so. Social fulfilment leads to adoption, say Parker and Plank (2000,[8])

Why people are so enamoured with social media is explained by its "user-friendly" and "let users manage" features as well as its user-generated material. According to Osatuyi and Passerini (2016,[6]), students typically view social media as a tool primarily for social, recreational, and entertainment purposes rather than as a tool for formal and learning-oriented practises. Adoption of another social media platform would result from a discrepancy in the satisfaction levels expected and actually received from one.

Pang (2020,[7]) found that one of the reasons for using social media, other from to kill boredom, is to keep up with trends. Social media is well known for promoting a variety of trends that have a tendency to affect users' lives. However, users rely on social media to learn about these trends. The participants' responses to the satisfaction they felt from using social media included social engagement, self-profiling, reducing boredom, self-expression, information exchange, and amusement across platforms. The desire for entertainment is a key factor in social media usage. In order to entice users to utilise social media as frequently as possible, it strives to offer them a variety of entertainment alternatives. Rrustremi et al (2021,[9]) found different levels of activity on LinkedIn among college students. LinkedIn gives its users a variety of interactive features since it is a top professional network, and those who take use of them have a better chance of advancing their careers. It was often stressed that they should expand and build their network of contacts. It was thought to be a rewarding experience in particular to be able to expand on pre-existing contacts to connect with other business leaders. "The simplicity of contacting professionals in or outside of their network without having to look up their email addresses was another appealing aspect that LinkedIn users mentioned. Participants were encouraged to use university or workplace resources to make and keep contacts, such as professors, alumni, and clubs. The LinkedIn experience was linked to the capability of building a network of contacts and the simplicity of reaching out to professionals. Through self-promotion and showing their resumes, college students were encouraged to create an online presence on LinkedIn. In contrast, low engagement on LinkedIn may be the result of failure to identify that it might satiate the desire to acquire professional information, which may lessen nonusers' motivation to join the network.

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The belief that LinkedIn helps one progress one's career only after graduating from college is the main concern voiced by both light users and nonusers. Social media is a powerful medium among students and, at the same time, competes with traditional media for their attention. According to the research, Facebook Groups' characteristics encourage engagement, which in turn helps students with their higher-order demands. College students use social media the most frequently and extensively for sociability and information collecting. Though there was plenty of available resources for seeking reference for this topic, which helped in the proper completion of this research project, a need for primary research is experienced. The results derived from primary research may have helped with better observations, conclusions and results. Furthermore, the group which was studied and the individuals whose viewpoints were observed aren't that large sample that can have the capability to represent & reflect the media usage & behaviour of a population of significant size. The other limitation is though the topic is regarding media uses, the whole research project is from the view point of social media. It doesn't factor in the usage of traditional media.

VI. CONCLUSION

Digital natives "are accustomed to getting information relatively quickly, prefer pictures before text rather than the contrary, prefer random access (like hypertext), thrive on instant pleasure and regular rewards, and prefer games over "serious" labour". Socializing, amusement, pursuing one's own status, and informational purposes are the four main applications and causes of satisfaction for SNS users. Other reasons that have occasionally been mentioned include reputation-building (being cool), avoiding loneliness, spying on others (seeing who has joined Facebook or what they are doing), and amusement. Students' embrace of Facebook is a tendency that comes from a desire to fit in. A bigger societal tendency as well as peer group dynamics play a role in the impulse to communicate with pals over SNSs. People who use social media heavily have a sizable social network that they rely on for news and information. The fear of missing out is a major driving force for college students' use of social media and mobile devices. The drive of students to seek connection or to prevent social isolation is intimately related to such fear of missing out. Sense of belonging is frequently understood as the individual's involvement in a given group or community, which makes them feel like an integral part of the organisation and surroundings. It's important to keep in mind that, despite being categorised as "non-academic" Internet uses, activities like communicating via email, social networking, using instant messaging apps, and participating in chat rooms can still be crucial learning experiences, particularly with the regular use of electronic devices to access networked academic environments, communicating with professors, and blurring the lines between virtual and real-life spheres. Social networking can help with the social aspects of college adjustment. Instead of focusing on teaching students how to use tools, digital technology education should focus on preparing them to be future leaders in their fields of study as well as active participants in the global community. College students use and built social capital on different social media platforms for gratification of their various desires. The gratifications sought and obtained

varies from platform to platform. Socializing, amusement, pursuing one's own status, and informational purposes are the four main applications and causes of satisfaction for SNS users. Though SNSs can be great source for learning with regards to the academic pursuits but students intend to use it for fun rather than to utilize it for something that they perceive as work (in this case work implies study). The gratification sought by the college students come from specific needs that are: strengthening information, knowledge, and understanding, strengthening aesthetic, pleasurable and emotional experience, strengthening credibility, confidence, stability, and status, strengthening contact with family, friends, and the world are the needs that students seek to fulfil using SNSs. Now it becomes imperative for marketers to design and create solutions keeping these particular needs in mind for future markets.

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