Department of Mass Communication

USES AND GRATIFICATIONS OF FACEBOOK: THE PARTICIPATORY CULTURE OF
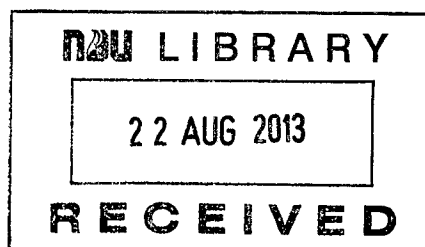LEBANESE USERS

A Thesis
Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Media Studies/ Electronic Media

by

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Fall Semester, 2012

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Abstract

The surge in number of Facebook users over the last years has been propelled by their needs for social integration, self-expression, and information seeking. This paper explored the motivations for using Facebook, and the gratifications Lebanese users derive from those uses. Moreover, this study examined the frequency of Facebook participation of the Lebanese user.

A literature review was done on the scholarly research covering the areas of social networking sites, new media and Uses and Gratifications theory. The theoretical framework was used to determine what are the motivations for Facebook uses, and what needs were fulfilled by Facebook. To test these needs and their satisfaction, this thesis employed an online survey. The data was then analyzed and the results presented and discussed.

This thesis found out that the Lebanese population has rather experience in using Facebook, the majority accessed the social network on a daily basis, spending an average of at least two hours. Results revealed that Lebanese participants use Facebook for surveillance and entertainment reasons, although their initial participation in Facebook is driven by their social integrative motivational need. And finally Lebanese Facebook users are passive spectators in their Facebook participation.

Introduction

User-generated content (UGC) is any media content that is produced by amateur users. Croteau (2004) considers user-generated content as self-produced media content. In addition, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2007) defines UGC as: "content made publicly available over the Internet, which reflects a certain amount of creative effort, and is created outside of professional routines and practices"(p. 4).

The notion of UGC is not new. An overview of past practices shows that media users were provided with an array of participatory tools such as readers' letters, and radio phone-ins. The current notion of UGC, however, is emphasized due to the popularity of user-centered digital media such as social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube), wikis (Wikipedia), and search engines (Google). This dissertation, explores the UGC pertaining to Facebook participation.

Facebook is a social networking site founded in 2004 (Lampe, Ellison & Steinfield, 2006). It encompasses a variety of media content and collaboration methods, including but not restricted to, social networking, photo sharing, user rating & review, market, blogs, discussion boards, games, and online video (Jenkins, 2004). According to Facebook.com (2012), there are more than 350 million active users. Almost half of these users log in to Facebook every day. More than 35 million status updates are posted each day. More than 2.5 billion photos are uploaded every month. Over 3.5 billion pieces of content are shared every week. An average Facebook user has about 130 friends on their profile, sends 8 friend requests per month and spends at least 55 minutes a day on Facebook. Moreover, an average user writes about 25 comments on content each month (Facebook, 2012). One of the pertinent characteristics of Facebook is content self-publishing, or personal publishing (Downes, 2004).

Since the current shift in media is towards the user as a collaborator and a consumer (the prosumer), it is more important than ever to understand motivational factors that drive Facebook consumption (McQuail, 2000). The power shift towards user centric media challenges theorists to change the traditional perception of identifying audiences, less focus is put on examining the theoretical effects of social media and more on understanding why and how consumers use social media (Severin & Tankard, 1992). Therefore, it is imperative to gain a better understanding of the uses and gratifications of Facebook within the current Lebanese media environment. Lebanese users produce and consume online content on a daily basis via Facebook. However, their participation in Facebook in conjunction with its effect on their online behavior is largely unknown. The key objective of this research is to understand the role of the Lebanese user gratifications in the context of Facebook, through investigating the relationship between users' motivation, in other words, consumption or generation, and the gratification of their cognitive, social , and entertainment needs.

Facebook provides the user with the abilities to comment, watch and upload video, photos, and music, whilst being user-friendly.

Exploring the uses and gratifications of Facebook, aids in understanding social media usage, consumption and effects. Little is known concerning the Lebanese population when it comes to online media usage. Moreover, there is no literature or conceptual understanding of the motivations and the uses of social media, and the integration of the social media tools into the online communication process among Lebanese. By closely examining the reasons and frequency for Lebanese use of Facebook, alongside their level of participation, this study bridges a gap that is currently found in the scholarly literature. Given the emphasis on audience as producer, users of social networking sites like Facebook not only adopt a new form of

communication—interpersonal communication on a mass scope--but also redefine the meaning

of media and broadcasting (Schultz, 2000). With the advent of user-generated content such as

comments, ratings, user reviews, users have become an integral source in the production and /or

distribution of traditional media content, via telecommunication and the Internet.

This thesis is divided as follows: The next section reviews the relevant literature regarding the

uses-and-gratifications framework, where previous research on uses and gratifications, and

Facebook are reviewed, leading to the proposition of research questions and assumptions. The

methodology section discusses the process of data collection and analysis, and lists the

operational variables, which will measure the research questions and test the assumptions posited

by this paper. Then the results are presented, followed by the discussion section. Finally the

thesis concludes with a summary and the limitations, along with some recommendations for

future research and further studies.

Literature Review

Current literature regarding social media, and Facebook usage are also reviewed. Facebook is introduced, and proposed motivations and gratifications from Facebook are explored. Moreover, this section examines the theoretical framework of the uses-and-gratifications theory.

Social Media, Facebook, and Uses and Gratifications

Social media have altered the way the world communicates, connects, and conducts business (Moody, 2010). Research reveals that people are currently utilizing several social media tools in order to communicate with each other, and it was deduced that these tools provide unique gratifications to users (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010). Facebook provides a plethora of user abilities ranging from the self-presentation, to adding and interacting with friends, commenting on their activities, viewing other's profiles, learning about others' hobbies, interests, musical tastes, and relationship status. According to Henderson (2008) individuals network connections, or friends, are able to write messages on a user's wall, as well as edit or delete what they have written.

Groups/pages on Facebook enable users to share common interests with one another. Users belonging to certain pages have the chance to meet others sharing their interests. Moreover Facebook groups/pages allow members to contribute information about a specific topic, and engage in discussions with other members. The groups/pages feature contributes to interactivity on Facebook as well as providing the user with an active public voice (Feezell, Conroy & Guerrero 2009).

Perry (2002) suggests that positive or negative user attitudes towards a given medium influence user motivations. According to Myers (1998), the strength of the relationship between attitudes

and behaviors for a given medium is of varying degrees of strength. Fazio (1986) however, identifies three components key in developing attitudes, which are affection, cognition, based on users' feelings, and beliefs, and intention.

The review of previous literature pertaining to uses and gratifications theory, yielded the following motivations for media usage: learning, relational maintenance, information seeking, socialization, self-expression, entertainment, surveillance, medium appeal, and routine (Rubin, 2002; Perse & Dunn, 1998, LaRose & Eastin, 2004).

The literature has explored various media, however one should not generalize the results as applicable to all media. This study explores the uses and gratifications of digital media, which include the social media site Facebook, and as previously mentioned, fulfill certain needs differently as well as gratify unique needs sought by the user (Ferguson & Perse, 2000).

Previous studies focused on audience motivation of media usage by answering the question of why people used certain media? The researchers explored conventional media such as radio, newspapers, telephone, VCR, and television (Bandura, 1985).

With the current communication technologies, users have an array of media options, such as SMS subscription news, social networking sites, RSS feeds, online newsletters, youtube, to choose from, and therefore it is crucial to examine the motivations and gratifications. These options are different; Youtube, SMS subscription, online newsletters, and RSS feeds rely simply on expanding the reach of traditional media such as newspapers, magazines radio, and television. Where as social networking sites combine traditional media technologies and interactivity with social interpersonal communication.

Uses and gratifications of emerging digital media have been explored in some studies. Perse & Dunn (1998) examined the gratifications of computer use, the top motivations obtained were:

- Entertainment needs

- Escapism

- Force of habit and routine

- For passing time when there is nothing to do

Papacharissi & Rubin (2002) explored motivations and satisfaction of using the Internet. They deduced the following motivations:

- Interpersonal utility

- Pass time

- Information seeking

- Convenience

- Entertainment

These studies found similar motivations to those derived from conventional media. New motivation emerged due to digital media attributes.

Ferguson & Perse (2000) noted the technical aspects of digital media elicit the media choice of online users. Digital media gratify unique needs sought by the user. An example of a new motivation added to the conventional list is medium appeal. Medium appeal are motivations users can obtain from a certain medium which is not available from other media such as sights and sounds, anonymity, security and privacy issues, and interactive control.

Moreover, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) conceptualize social media as enabling platforms of constant content generation. Social networking sites allow users participation and collaboration, thus providing democratized information through reliance on user-generated content. Additionally, it is easy to create and provide content on Facebook. However, it is up to the users to choose whether they would want to create and provide content and which content they choose. The study sought a qualitative analysis approach in studying social network sites as Second Life and Facebook. Based on the analysis of user comments and satisfactions, the study took for granted that Facebook users are creating and providing content via their profiles. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) were not exploring whether or not social networking users are active, but the purpose of their study was to "derive recommendations companies should follow when thinking about developing their own Social Media strategy." Initially research needs to establish that users are actively engaged on Facebook, before conceptualizing that users provide and create content. Moreover, the question of what content is created and provided, proves necessary to formulate the prediction of future usage of Facebook, as well as the motivations and choices users make.

Another study regarding the gratifications sought from Facebook, found that Facebook provides distribution of information, feedback, and the promotion of organizations. In addition, Facebook creates the opportunity for participating in a community (Stassen, 2010). This study focused on the organizational structure of Facebook, thus examining Facebook as information system.

Raacke et Al. (2008) concluded that uses and gratifications of Facebook are primarily related to keep in touch with friends (96.0%), to post and look at pictures (57.4%), and to make new friends (56.4%). This study found that using Facebook for personal publishing is less frequent

and gratifying. Furthermore, users were found to spend 1.46 hours a day managing their account and 1.10 hours a day viewing others' accounts (Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008). The study sampled a total of 201 East coast university students in order to determine the use of networking sites. Participants were asked to fill out a survey, which opened up with asking whether students have a Facebook account. If the answer were yes, the subjects would proceed in answering general information about their accounts. These questions contained what type of accounts participants had and how long they had these account, in addition to account related activity. Furthermore, participants had to indicate on a scale from 1 (does not apply) to 7 (definitely applies to me) if a list of reasons for having a Facebook account applies to them.

The latter research predicts that Facebook users are less active than other studies have suggested. They are frequently accessing their Facebook accounts, however, the usage of Facebook is strictly for surveillance and socialization.

A similar study completed by Park, Kee, and Valenzuela (2009) yielded that 70% of the variance in joining Facebook, was distributed among the following gratifications:

- Socialization
- Entertainment
- Information seeking
- Status seeking behavior.

Additional research confirms that the number of social media spectators (passive consumers) is higher to that of active content producers (Bernoff, 2010).

A prominent feature of Facebook is that it can be accessed from a computer, laptop, tablet, or mobile communication device. Lueng & Wei (2000) found that mobility, immediacy, and instrumentality are among the basic motivations for using mobile devices. The study investigated

motivation scales to measure the uses of mobile technologies. Respondents were asked to state their levels of agreement with reasons for using mobile technologies, as part of an online survey. Since Facebook is compatible with such devices, and can be accessed using the technologies and characteristics made available by mobile communication devices, then Facebook adapts the uses and gratifications pertaining to real-time information updates, interactions among users, and easy access from anywhere at anytime.

Participation

Henry Jenkins (2006) believes that: "Audiences, empowered by the emergence of social media applications, [demand] the right to participate within the culture." Under the old media model, users had little power to influence content, whereas "social media expands the scope and reach of consumer activities" (Jenkins, 2006).

He posits a paradigm shift in the production and distribution of media content due to the empowerment of audiences by web tools such as user-generated content and the development of social networking. Jenkins (2006) believes that this shift yields an active participatory culture. Moreover, he defines an opposition between passive participation (media users as spectators) and active participation (users as creators and distributors of media). Jenkins elaborates; due to the vastly available web technologies, and UGC sites, users can create and distribute their own content, thus making them part of the media production process. However, it is a fallacy to assume that these technologies turn everyone into active participants. I would like to distinguish between the various degrees of participation.

According to OECD (2007) there are six levels of participation. A study conducted on online users of SNS and UGC sites showed that 13% 'active creators' –users who actually

produce and upload content such as weblogs, videos/photos. 19 % are labeled 'critics' by the study, meaning they only provide ratings, reviews, or comments. Another 19 % are 'joiner users' who sign up for social networking sites such as MySpace or Facebook, without contributing any content. 33% are 'passive spectators', who read blogs, comments and reviews, watch videos, browse photos, and finally 52% are 'inactive users" who never perform any activity. The latter suggests that participation does not mean active contribution (OECD, 2007).

Facebook Participation

According to Priedhosky and Chen (2007), a small percentage of users provide the majority of the content on Facebook. To explain these results, Priedhosky and Chen used the Tragedy of Commons theoretical model which is based in economic theories, and states that when something is freely consumed without any inhibitions, there exists little motive to contribute to the maintenance of that good (Ostrom, 1991). Lampe et al. (2005) investigated the reason for new users to participate on Facebook, and the influence of feedback from other users, from a social perspective. Lampe explored the "Friending" aspect of Facebook, investigating users with "whom one shares an offline connection, such as a shared class or mutual friend," as well as close friends who are using SNS to stay in touch. The research concluded that using Facebook is highly for the close friends to maintain their relationships than for meeting strangers.

According to Spurgeon (2007), interactivity is a technological possibility enabling communication in closed systems, while participation indicates the will for such communication in a cultural and social context. Szuprowicz (1995) and others (MacMillan, 2006) classified interactivity into three different forms: user to user, user to documents, and user to system.

The first form of interactivity is between users, which is based on interpersonal human communications. Walther (1996) proposes that social media provide new tools for facilitating human communication, Moreover he believes that although interpersonal communication is inherently human, it is more easily mediated via technology.

The second is the interactivity with the document itself, as actively using a certain medium. This form of interaction yields the creation of content, and is the backbone for user-generated content and social media (MacMillan, 2006).

User to system interactivity defines the relationship and interaction between users and a given system. Users manipulate the various tools of a given system in order to perform a certain task. According to Kayany, Wotring, and Forrest (1996) media users have different motivations for choosing any of the three forms of interactivity mentioned above.

Furthermore, Hindman (2008) believes "It may be easy to speak in cyberspace, but it remains difficult to be heard". Hindman explains that only a small group of highly educated professionals who are vastly over-represented in opinion making contribute online content. He posits that people are mistakenly thought to use the Internet in search of new information. Nevertheless, Hindman's research, established that people use the web to consolidate and confirm what they already know (Hindman, 2008).

Slovenian sociologist, philosopher and cultural critic, Slavoj Žižek (1998) introduces the concept of interpassivity. According to Žižek, social media provide the user with a false sense of interactivity. He argues that the medium itself is what is active, not the subject, who is passive. Žižek states: 'you think you are active, while your true position, as it is embodied in the fetish, is passive'. Žižek refers to the Marxist notion of commodity-fetishism to imply that social relations are increasingly reduced to objects (Žižek, 1998).

The Facebook newsfeed/timeline consists of constant updates featuring users' Facebook activities. These updates posted and received by Facebook whether users open the page or not, thus allowing users to view them later. Moreover, Facebook has on the right side of the page highlights, displaying users interests. Similarly, email notifications, new message, or a tag are received by Facebook, which in turn notifies the user via e-mail.

Theoretical Framework

This section explains the Uses and Gratifications theory, and the Social Cognitive perspective, which are pertinent in answering the research questions and eventually testing the hypotheses of this research.

Facebook provides users with motivations that are not usually present in conventional media as audiovisual characteristics, anonymity, and interactive control.

In addition, uses and Gratifications theory posits five fundamental claims. The First claim suggests that users must be active in choosing and using certain media. The second says users have to be goal oriented in their usage. Users need to have a specific reason for choosing and using a certain medium. Third, the chosen media must be capable of fulfilling a plethora of users needs. The reason for choosing a certain medium is linked directly to the ability of that medium to satisfy the many needs of the users. Fourth media participants must cognitively and aptly communicate their motives for media selection and usage. In other words, users should be able to clearly state why they choose certain media.

Rosengren et al. (1985) adds: "if audience members are to select from among various media and non-media alternatives according to their needs, they must have some perceptions of the alternatives most likely to meet those needs" (p. 22).

As a premise of the uses and gratifications approach, media users ought to be well aware of why they choose to use a certain medium. Nonetheless such cognition is related to the degree of fulfillment that the certain medium provides, the fact that users are actively engaged, and goal-oriented.

Uses and gratifications theory fifthly indicates the importance of content as well as exposure to such content. What holds pertinent to this research, are the first four assumptions.

According to LaRose, Mastro, and Eastin (2001), the relationship between the gratifications

sought and those obtained, helps describe the social-cognitive interactions of online users.

Uses and Gratifications Theory

In 1974, Katz and Bulmer (1974) suggested that communication research ought to be asking, "what do people do with the media", and abandon the studying of "what do media do to people." In seeking an answer to their question, Katz and Bulmer formulate the uses and gratification approach, which focused on the media user.

Bulmer and Katz thought there are several uses of the same media, and that each user may have different reasons and motivations. According to Bulmer and Katz (1974) users have a clear aim behind choosing certain media, and they actively participate in using it. In addition, the approach claims that, in choosing a medium, users are influenced by their own needs. Users seek to satisfy an array of needs through their media choices. These needs are defined as follows:

1. Cognitive Needs: Seeking information, knowledge, and understanding defines the cognitive needs sought. This is the most important motivation for using digital media and the Internet. Cognitive needs include: being informed, learning about new things, problem solving, guidance, surveillance, and educational and professional advancement.

2. Entertainment needs: relaxation, pleasure, affection, escapism, and pass time, seeking pleasurable and emotional satisfaction.

3. Personal Integrative Needs: are a combination of cognitive and entertainment needs. Motivations include: status, economic motivation, promotion, and persuasion.

4. Social Needs: Strengthening relationships with family, and friends are indentified with social integrative needs are related to these needs prove valuable in interpersonal communications. The motivations these needs cater to are: identity, self-expression, social binding, relationship maintenance, socialization, inclusion, and social

relationships.

5. Medium Appeal Needs: are recent needs that stem out of computer mediated communication technologies. Such needs include motivations like: multimedia, anonymity, online transactions, online privacy, and interactivity.

Theorists believe users browse sources that best fulfill their needs (Griffin, 2000). The core of this theory relies on users' attendance, and perception in media, in order to satisfy their needs. Blumler and Katz (1968) investigated reasons for personal media appeal and feeling concerning provided contents, deducing several reasons for media usage.

Uses and Gratifications Theory posits the use of media as means to satisfying specific user needs (West &Turner, 2000).

Moreover, Palmgreen et al. (1980) expanded the notion of gratifications by differentiating between gratifications sought and gratifications obtained. This posits that whatever gratifications users opt to receive from a media might not be the same as the gratifications actually receive. Studies have revealed that gratifications obtained are a better predictor of media use than gratifications sought. (Palmgreen & Rayburn, 1980).

Cognitive needs

Information seeking, knowledge, and understanding are needs pertaining to cognitive gratifications. Social media is built around communication, guidance through user-to-user interaction, and reviews, information/surveillance, transmission of information and education, professional advancement, and customized search (West &Turner, 2000).

Surveillance

The surveillance need of Uses and Gratifications as identified by Blumler and McQuail (1972) suggests that media users want to know what is going on in the world around them. Surveillance needs are related to satisfying curiosity and seeking reinforcement of personal attitudes and values (Blumler & McQuail, 1972).

Entertainment needs

Needs related to tension release, escapism, and pass time. In addition these needs include diversion, relaxation, and sexual arousal (Rosengren, 1985).

Social integrative needs

Keeping in touch with family, friends, and acquaintances, as well as meeting new people relate to the social gratifications obtained. Social media promises interpersonal communication through various web tools. Facebook for instance encourages socialization through self-expression, and relationship maintenance (Rafaeli & Sudweeks, 1997).

Uses and Gratifications: A Social Cognitive Perspective

Uses and Gratifications is a Media Attendance Theory. This study however utilizes a social Cognitive Perspective of Uses and Gratifications. This perspective takes into consideration that gratifications have been altered with the introduction of the Internet.

According to Stone (1998), the foundations for social cognitive theory are present in behaviorism. Social Cognitive Theory classifies human behavior into a reciprocal interaction between personal factors, behavior, and the environment (Bandura, 1986).

The three basic principles of Social Cognitive Theory are (Stone, 1998):

1. People will perform a certain behavior again in a given situation if a reward or a

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punishment system is applied.

2. A person can learn by observing someone else in addition to learning by doing or participating.

3. Subjects are most likely to replicate the behavior of others.

Social cognitive theory can be applied to choosing and using media (Bandura, 2002).

A new model of media attendance relating to Social Cognitive theory was formulated by Larose and Eastin (2004). They closely predicted media consumption by establishing new operational constructs of expected gratifications. These new measures helped explain gratifications, as outcome expectations, which suggested current notions of possible future behavior.

Uses and gratifications theory initially considers media users to be active communicators (Ruggiero, 2000). Katz and his colleagues (1974) elaborated on the status being of active. They believe that choosing and using media, subjects anticipate specific communication goals, and they proceed in evaluating the potential gratifications possibly obtained from a specific medium and its contents, and then make their selection accordingly. Moreover, users make a conscious and goal-directed choice among media channels and content (McQuail, 1994).

Rubin (1994) questioned audience activity in his research, concluding that not all audience members are equally active all the time. Many factors (external and internal) might affect the degree to which audience actively use the media.

Under conventional media, user activity was embodied in free will to participate, as well as the autonomy to choose among available media channels and content.

However audience activity then was reduced (Rubin, 1994). Television audiences for instance had control over their personal decision of channel and content selection. Nonetheless, the personal decision is limited by the user's inability to control the content.

In order to be active, subjects have to adopt other channels of interpersonal communication such as telephone and mail. The interaction between users and the media was restricted to interpersonal communication due to the lack of any other feedback mechanism. The activity then was restricted to one-way communication mechanism.

With the emergence of social media, this unidirectional orientation from media to audience changed. The Internet amalgamates both mass communication and interpersonal communication under one channel—Internet users can obtain information and send feedback without having to leave the same communication context. In addition, interactivity is one of the main factors in contributing to audience activity.

The new media have overcome the temporal and spatial limits of traditional media. Audiences do not have to change their schedule to follow the agenda set by the media; instead, they have access to the information they need whenever and wherever Internet access is available. Still, like its precedents, the audience activity of Internet users can be influenced by a set of factors and thus it may cause various levels of activeness. For example, a broadband Internet user may devote more leisure time online because of the enjoyable experience enriched by audio and video content that takes advantage of the high data transfer rate. Contrastively, a dial-up user may prefer more text-based information to avoid the extra time needed for downloading larger data files. Due to their unique user experience, the two types of users consequently exhibit various saliencies towards the Internet media. The information, similar in essence though, could elicit different reactions from audiences. Hence, the variety in audience activity should suggest different patterns of media use and thus lead to diverse media effects.

Another important element to understanding the use of Facebook is how active participants are. Morris and Ogan (1996) posited that the concept of active users should continue to be included

in current and future Internet research. Charney and Greenberg (2002) emphasized that "the Internet, however, would seem to allow little passivity on the parts of its users" (p. 381). Exploring the role of Internet user as contributors as well as consumers opens up new research possibilities.

Applying the uses and gratifications approach to examine Facebook is significant in studying audience behavior and motivations for media consumption. The uses and gratifications model posits that audiences make cognitive intentional decisions regarding which media and what media content they choose and consume, based on their needs and drives.

Facebook as a medium incorporates elements of human interaction, and mass communication. The uses and gratifications approach allows for a better prediction of why Lebanese users choose Facebook and what motivates them.

The uses and gratifications approach for this thesis explores choosing Facebook not only because of particular personal reasons, but also in attempts to show empowerment through active participation. This research tests whether Lebanese Facebook users are active in their media choices and participation, and explores the motivations behind such participation.

Research Questions

The previous section discussed the theoretical framework of the uses and gratifications and its application in digital media studies. Three research questions emerge to explore motivations for Lebanese use of Facebook. This research posits two assumptions, drawing on previous studies, and the relevant theories, which examine user participation and choice of media.

Uses and gratifications approach attempts to postulate media usage and choices, granted that individuals are active and well motivated in their decision. Previous research displayed how the uses and gratifications approach answers why people choose what media in order to satisfy what social and psychological needs and what consequences, either intended or unintended, will be caused (Katz et al., 1974). Nonetheless, these studies assume that users are active in choosing a certain medium. Active participation and use of media suggests peer-to-peer communication, production and/or distribution of information, and public relations in the form of adding new friends meeting strangers, and sharing content. This study explores users' active contribution, and investigates the relationship between user activity and motivations/gratifications for choosing and engaging in Facebook.

The creation and publishing of content grants users increased participation, and autonomy (Benkler, 2006). Social media changed the production and consumption of information. Many have considered this as a shift away from the passive media consumption model, towards an active participatory model—creating, interacting, and providing (Lessig, 2004). Based on the participatory models, The OECD classifications of participatory levels, and the Uses and Gratifications theory, my first assumption is that users proceed in evaluating the potential gratifications possibly obtained from a specific medium and its contents, and then make their

selection accordingly, in order to obtain gratification, as suggested by Blumler and Katz (1974). Thus Lebanese have clear motivations for using Facebook in order to seek certain gratifications. Additionally, the second assumption posits that although Facebook promises empowerment in the form of creating and distributing content (Facebook users as active contributors), it conforms to the passive consumption of mass media model (Facebook users as passive spectators)—This assumption utilizes the concept of interpassivity, where Facebook "interpassively" provides users with what to consume (Žižek, 1998), suggesting that users browse through whatever content was made available for them via Facebook, and restricted to Friends' pictures, comment, profile activity, timeline, likes, and pages.

Based on the reviewed literature, and the theoretical framework, the previous assumptions lead us to the following questions:

1. What is the frequency of participation of Lebanese users on Facebook?

2. What motivates Lebanese users to participate in Facebook?

3. What is the level of participation of Lebanese Facebook users, in other words are Lebanese Facebook users "passive spectators", "joiners", "critics", or "active contributors"?

Methodology

This section of the research defines the methodology employed to gather data, and outlines the analysis process. This thesis implies an exploratory research, since little is known about Lebanese uses of social networking sites. Moreover, no previous studies are available concerning Lebanese motivations for participating in social media, and the uses and gratifications of Facebook.

Research Design

This thesis is based on a quantitative research approach, in which date is collected and analyzed, using deductive reasoning to formulate a relationship between theory and research (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

Additionally, this thesis followed the cross-sectional approach. Cross-sectional research is used to answer questions about the motivations behind the Lebanese people's use of Facebook just one point in time (Dillman, 2000; Groves, Cialdini, & Couper, 1992).

Nomothetic analysis attempts to formulate general laws to explain the measurements and data collected from research. Nomothetic research is defined as an "approach to explanation in which we seek to identify a few features that generally characterize a class of conditions or events" (Baxter and Babbie, 2004: 425).

This dissertation studied a sample group of Lebanese Facebook users in an attempt to chart their motivations for participating in UGC on Facebook and their gratifications.

Subjects were asked to complete an online, cross-sectional, self-administered survey. Surveys prove to be the most popular method for researching Facebook, since individuals can be asked directly about their communication habits, furthermore it allows for the largest number of participants to partake in the study at low cost (Dellarocas et al., 2007). Participation in the study

was voluntary, and the survey was hosted by surveymonkey.com

The survey mentioned that responses were completely anonymous and that by filling out the survey, participants agreed to the use of their answers in the data set. While survey completion was not proctored, an IP address was limited to opening and submitting only one filled survey. This eliminated the possibility of one subject submitting multiple results.

Sampling

Respondents were subject to no age limit or a specific gender, as long as they satisfied the initial criteria of being Lebanese and having a Facebook account. This allowed for the results to be generalizable. The sample was non-random convenience sample due to the availability of the participants on Facebook.

Subjects were reached via the Facebook add-on application of surveymonkey.com. I initially started with sending my Lebanese Facebook friends an invitation to partake in an online survey. The invitation had a brief description, explaining the purpose of this survey and its confidentiality. Moreover, I instructed recipients to send it in turn to their Lebanese Facebook friends only, as non-Lebanese were outside the sample. I was opting for 150 responses as a sample size, and therefore created a response limit on the surveymonkey.com Facebook collector, which stops collecting answered surveys past the 150 counter. Of the sample at hand, 52% were male, and 48% were female. In addition 19 % of the respondents were under the age of 17. 36 % of the participants were between 18 – 21years of age. 20 % were between 22 and 25, 43% were between 26 - 30, years of age and finally 31 % were older than 31.

Constructs and Operational Variables

Facebook contains an array of social interaction tools. As defined in the literature, the social interaction needs are divided into three dimensions: (1) User to user (2) User to document, and (3) User to system. This research was only interested in the first two dimensions (User to user, and User to document). The user to user interaction allowed for measuring social motivations construct of using Facebook. User to user interaction functions of Facebook are: Comments, wall posts, like, poke, tag, adding friends, chat, and events. Moreover, social motivations are: to feel part of a community, to find other people who share same interests, to keep in touch with my family/friends/coworkers, to meet new people, to interact and discuss with other user, and finally because it is socially engaging.

The User to document interactivity enabled measuring the active contribution of browsing and participation in generating content usages on Facebook. Facebook functions that are reflective of user-to-document interaction are: uploading photo and video, starting new groups or pages, participating in 'APPS' (games, tests, quizzes, surveys), and starting events. Subjects were also asked about the reasons they generate content on Facebook. The reasons provided were: because it is easy to publish, to share information useful to other people, and to share photos, reviews, videos, and other interests. These are used to measure the level of participation of Lebanese Facebook users.

Moreover, this paper assigned variables relating to surveillance of other Facebook users, and information seeking. These variables are: browsing friends' profiles, scanning friends' status updates, joining groups or pages, and viewing others photos and videos. The reasons cited for using the surveillance function of Facebook were: to check what other people are up to, to see other people's opinions and contributions, to keep track of what is happening, because everyone

else is on Facebook, to get as much information out of the internet as possible, and to find information of interest.

This research also investigated personal self-expression needs by measuring the motivations for using the following Facebook functions: modify personal information, change profile picture, change status, and update user's own activities via user's wall, the following reasons relate to personal gratifications: so users provide information about themselves, for users to promote themselves professionally, so users can show their personality, because it makes users feel important, to post and share web content, and finally to democratically express themselves.

The motivations measure the gratifications sought by Lebanese Facebook users, and the uses of Facebook tools and functions measure the gratifications obtained.

Furthermore, in order to measure the level of participation the following constructs are used:

According to the OECD report (2007), "active creators" are users who actually produce and upload content. Adding friends, starting new events, starting new pages, uploading photos and videos, inviting friends to join events/ pages/ groups, poking others, and posting on wall, are used to measuring active contribution.

Whereas "critics", meaning those who only provide ratings, reviews, or comments were measured used the following Facebook functions: comments, Likes, and tagging.

As for the "joiners", who sign up for social networking sites as Facebook, without contributing any content the following Facebook uses are pertinent: accepting friends, RSVPing events, joining pages/groups. Finally, in order to measure passive spectatorship, reading comments and reviews, watching videos, and browsing photos without making any contribution, was measured

using the following Facebook functions: browsing others' profiles, scanning Friends' status updates, viewing others photos and videos, viewing timeline/newsfeed.

Moreover, the following variables were measured by the survey:

1. Demographics of participants: this section sought to measure such demographic characteristics as gender and age.

2. Patterns Facebook use: Frequency of access to Facebook website, the average hours spent on Facebook per day, how long they have been a registered user, number of content generated, frequency of logging in, time spent logged in every time, and location used. Patterns and Facebook were used to measure the frequency of Lebanese Facebook participation.

Results

Frequency

The first research question sought to answer the frequency of Lebanese participation in Facebook (refer to table 1.11).1.3% of the respondents reported that they had been Facebook users for less than one year, 10 % 1-3 years, 48 % for 4-6 years, and 34 % for 7-9 years. (refer to table 1.11)

Table 1.11 Frequency of Facebook Participation

	Frequency	Percentage
Experience		
Less than a year	2	1.3
1 - 3 years	16	10
4 - 6 years	72	48
7 - 9 years	51	34.0
Frequency of daily sign in		
10+ times	14	9.3
5-9 times	48	32.0
2-4 times	55	36.7
1 time	21	14
Time spent per day		
0-1 hour	50	33.3
2-5 hours	63	42
6-9 hours	20	13.3
10+ hours	6	4
Reply to other users' activity		
Very often	12	8.0
Often	35	23.3
Sometimes	50	33.3
Rarely	40	26.7
Never	3	2.0
Number of UGC entries		
Less than 50	12	8.0
51 -100	5	3.3
101 - 200	33	22
201 - 300	38	25.3
301-500	32	21.3
501 or more	21	14
Facebook friends		
10-50	4	2.7
50-100	9	6.0
100-150	29	19.3
150-200	43	28.7
200-more	54	36
Pages/groups joined		
None	1	0.7
5 or less	16	10.7
10 or less	27	18.0
15 or less	43	28.7
20 or more	53	35.3

Note.*1=very often, 2=often, 3=sometimes, 4=rarely, 5=never

Frequency of sign in and time spent

9.3% of the respondents were avid users who claimed to sign in more than 10 times daily.

32% signed in 5-9 times daily. 36.7% signed in 2-4 hours a day. And 14% signed in only once

per day. Moreover, 33.3% of participants spent no more than an hour every day. 42.0% used 2 to

5 hours. 13.3% invested between 6 and 9 hours, and finally 4% accessed Facebook for more than

10 hours.

Friends and replying to their activities

2.7% of the sample was friends with 10-50. 6% were friends with 50-100. 19% had 100-

150 friends. 28.9% had 150-200 friends. And finally 36% had more than 200 friends.

8.0% of participants replied very often to friends' activities. 23.3% often replied. 33.3%

sometimes replied. 26.7% rarely reply. And 2.0% never reply.

Generated content

8% of the respondents have generated no more than 50 contents on their Facebook page.

3.3% have provided 51-100 UGC, 22% had 101-200, 25.3% provided 201-300, 21.3% provided

301-500, and 14% provided more than 501.

The above results suggest that males and females between the age of 26 and 30 are the most

likely to be using Facebook. This age group is often in the workplace, thus being in contact with

a wider group of people and acquaintances. Facebook, most probably enables them to expand

and maintain their network of acquaintances and friends.

Additionally, adult Facebook users have an average of 4-6 years of experience, they access

Facebook 2-4 times daily spending between two and five hours. The majority of Lebanese users

has more than 150 friends on Facebook, and has provided 201-300 content, which logically leads

us to believe that Lebanese Facebook users are rather active in their online participation.

However, the results also reveal that only 33% sometime reply to their Friends' activities.

Pages/Groups

Concerning, Facebook pages/groups, 0.7% of the participants were not members. 10.7%

have joined less than five pages. 18% have joined 10 or fewer pages. 28% are members of 15 or

less pages. And 35.3% have joined 20 or more pages.

Concerning the topics of pages participants belonged to; interests/hobbies was the most

frequently joined pages topic (M = 1.4113, SD =0.91082). Second came entertainment topics

with M= 1.421, followed by family/friends created pages with M=2.37. Sports, humor, work

related, personal experience, technologies and science, education and academics, and business

were the less commonly covered content. Politics/politicians was the least frequently joined topic

(M=3.755, SD=1.055). The top three topics that were mostly joined by Lebanese Facebook

users, namely entertainment and hobbies/interests, and family/friends related pages, fall under

the cognitive needs of information seeking and surveillance.

External topics such as reflections and comments on politics, technology, and other public events

were not as popular among Lebanese users as the image formed by mass media; especially in the

promise of public will mobilization and democratic empowerment (refer to table 1.13).

Table 1.13 Topics of groups/pages

Topics	M	SD
Personal experience	3.4286	1.12616
Interests/hobbies	1.4113	.91082
Work related	3.3071	1.21677
Arts/culture	3.4823	1.18685
Family/friends	2.3786	1.33825
Entertainment	1.4214	.94502
Technology	3.6214	1.17815
Politics	3.7554	1.05530
Education	3.2518	1.28590
Business	3.1168	1.15724
Sports	2.8058	1.38772
Religion	3.3525	1.07584
	3.2429	1.09854

Note.*1=very often, 2=often, 3=sometimes, 4=rarely, 5=never

Location of access

56% of participants used mobile devices to access Facebook (refer to table 1.12). Nielsen's "State of the Media: The Social Media Report – Q3 2011" suggests that ability to access social media is a commonly used feature among mobile owners. According to a recent study by NM Incite, nearly 2 in 5 social media users access these services from their mobile phones (Nielsen, 2012).

Table 1.12 Location of Access

	Frequency	Percentage
From Home		
Very often	43	28.7
Often	24	16.0
Sometimes	19	12.7
Rarely	22	14.7
Never	29	19.3
From Work	5	3.3
Very often	7	4.7
Often	23	15.3
Sometimes	28	18.7
Rarely	75	50.0
Never		
From School	0	
Very often	0	
Often	0	
Sometimes	3	2.0
Rarely	9	6.0
Never	120	80.0
From Laptop	15	10.0
Very often	28	18.7
Often	19	12.7
Sometimes	18	12.0
Rarely	59	39.3
Never		
From Mobile Devices	52	34.7
Very often	32	21.3
Often	26	17.3
Sometimes	13	8.7
Rarely	18	12.0
Never		

Note.*1=very often, 2=often, 3=sometimes, 4=rarely, 5=never

Motivations

The second research question sought to determine the motivations behind Lebanese

Facebook participation (refer to table 1.16).

When it came to the social motivations behind using Facebook, results showed that most

participants use Facebook to 'stay in touch with friends/family/coworkers' with M=1.5957,

SD=0.65442. Participants use Facebook 'because it is socially engaging' with M=2.1176 and

SD=0.85252. Third was using Facebook 'because everyone else is on Facebook' with M=2.1460

and SD=0.87900.

As for the cognitive motivations, participants chose 'to check what others are up to' the most

(M=2.0368, SD=0.72963). The second most important motivation for using Facebook was 'to

see other people's opinions and contributions' (M=2.0507, and SD=0.60801). The third cognitive

motivation, was 'To keep track of what is happening' (M=2.2101, SD=0.80557).

The top three in other reasons behind using Facebook are: 'because it is entertaining'

(M=1.6103, SD=0.66858), 'it is part of my online routine' (M=2.0949, SD=0.7464), and finally

'helps pass the time' (M=2.1871, SD=0.90545).

When it came to personal use/self-expression, the first motivation was ' to provide information

about myself' (M=2.6991, SD=0.87135).

Table 1.16 Facebook Motivations

Needs	Needs Score	
	Mean	SD
Social interaction		
To feel part of a community	2.4820	.89566
To find other people with same interests	2.4203	.73307
To keep in touch with my	1.5957	.65442
family/friends/coworkers	2.6014	.88408
To meet new people	2.7259	.88461
To interact and discuss with other users	2.1176	.85252
Because it is socially engaging	2.8986	.89842
Share information useful to other people	2.7372	.81593
Share photos reviews/videos/other interests	3.0791	.83462
Surveillance/information seeking		
To check what other people are up to	2.0368	.79263
To see other people's opinions	2.0507	.60801
Because everyone else is on Facebook	2.1460	.87900
To get the most out of the internet	3.3551	1.07256
To keep track of what is happening	2.2101	.80557
To find information of interest	2.5870	.94929
Personal use/self expression		
To provide information about myself	2.6691	.87135
To promote myself professionally	3.5683	1.27433
To show my personality	3.4667	1.04952
Because it makes me feel important	3.5662	1.03066
To post and share web content	2.8261	.92739
To democratically express myself	3.9778	.97327
Because I can publish at anytime	2.9065	.91598
Other		
It is easy to update	2.9130	1.00712
Because it is fun to try out new things	3.1942	1.01352
Because I can access it wherever I am	2.5639	.90749
Helps pass the time	2.1871	.90545
Because it is entertaining	1.6103	.66858
It is part of my online routine	2.0949	.74640

Note.*1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neither agree nor disagree,
4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree

Of all three categories, the top motivation for using Facebook was 'to stay in touch with family/friends/coworkers.' The second top motivation was 'because using Facebook is entertaining'. And finally the third motivation was 'to check what others are up to.' The main motivation for Lebanese Facebook participation is for satisfying social integrative and entertainment needs.

Independent samples t tests were run to examine the gender differences in uses of Facebook, there was no significant difference.

The results showed that users initially seek to take advantage of the easy accessibility, to keep in touch with friends and family, and to feel socially engaged with their Facebook friends.

Socialization is considered an important motivation of Facebook in developing and maintaining interpersonal communication.

Uses

Of all the user to user interactive tools on Facebook, *Like* was used the most $M=2.7286$, followed by *Chat* with $M=2.9786$, then posting on friends' wall with $M=2.992$. As for user to document interactive tools the most used was the upload photos and videos function with $M=2.8085$ followed by accepting friends with $M=3.078$. Both user to user and user to document constructs measured the social integrative uses of Facebook. According to the data in the table above, the most used social functions of Facebook are the *Like* button, and uploading photos and videos to user profile, followed by chatting and messaging of friends, then finally posting on friends' wall. In fourth position came the *comment* function with $M=3.00$.

As for the functions associated with cognitive gratifications, viewing the Timeline/newsfeed on Facebook scored the highest with $M=1.4130$. Then came viewing friends' photos and videos

with M=1.4894, followed by scanning friends' status updates with M=1.5324. Browsing friends'

profiles scored M=1.7305, and least within this category was joining pages with M=3.0214.

As for the functions pertaining to personal cognitive needs, participants most often seemed to

update their activities via their wall (blogging) with M=2.5390. This was followed by status

update with M=2.6286. In third, came changing profile picture with M=2.7410. In total, the top

four most used functions satisfy the cognitive needs of surveillance (viewing the

Timeline/newsfeed, viewing friends' photos and videos, scanning friends' status updates, and

browsing friends' profiles) (refer to table 1.14)

Table 1.14 Facebook Uses

Facebook Functions	Functions Score	
	Mean	SD
Social interaction	**3.4399**	**.542293**
Like	2.7286	.84686
Upload photo/video	2.8085	.80103
Chat	2.9786	.96312
Post on friends' wall	2.9929	.82668
Comment	3.0000	.75864
Add friends	3.0429	.70834
Accept friends	3.0780	.81127
Tag	3.2286	.90038
Poke	3.4892	.99540
Invite Friends to events or groups	3.6214	.90933
RSVP events	4.3688	.95925
Start new group	4.3929	.91113
Start events	4.8309	.53824
Surveillance/information seeking	**1.8277**	**.63948**
View Timeline/Newsfeed	1.4130	.70170
View others photos and videos	1.4894	.84191
Scan friends' status updates	1.5324	1.03771
Browse friends' profiles	1.7305	.92489
Join pages/groups	3.0214	.75358
Personal use/self expression	**2.7373**	**.89876**
Update your own activities via your wall	2.5390	1.08574
Change your status	2.6286	1.10813
Change profile picture	2.7410	1.10557
Modify personal information	3.0071	1.07900

Note.*1=very often, 2=often, 3=sometimes, 4=rarely, 5=never

The research confirmed that the gratifications obtained from using Facebook are different than those sought for using Facebook in the first place. As the respondents engage in Facebook to satisfy their social integrative needs, they eventually obtain gratification for their cognitive needs, namely surveillance and information seeking.

Level of participation

The third and last research question sought to explore the level of participation, according to the constructs introduced by OECD study (2007) (refer to table 1.15).

Table 1.15 Degree of Participation

Participatory Levels	Levels Score	
	Mean	SD
Active Creator	**3.599782**	**.538741**
Upload photo/video	2.8085	.80103
Chat	2.9786	.96312
Post on friends' wall	2.9929	.82668
Add friends	3.0429	.70834
Poke	3.4892	.99540
Invite Friends to events or groups	3.6214	.90933
Start new group	4.3929	.91113
Start events	4.8309	.53824
Critic	**2.9903**	**.686968**
Like	2.7286	.84686
Comment	3.0000	.75864
Tag	3.2286	.90038
Joiner	**3.4857**	**.631407**
Accept friends	3.0780	.81127
RSVP events	4.3688	.95925
Join pages/groups	3.0214	.75358
Passive Spectator	**1.5292**	**.725751**
View Timeline/Newsfeed	1.4130	.70170
View others photos and videos	1.4894	.84191
Scan friends' status updates	1.5324	1.03771
Browse friends' profiles	1.7305	.92489
Join pages/groups	3.0214	.75358

Note.*1=very often, 2=often, 3=sometimes, 4=rarely, 5=never

Functions that fall under the "active creator" construct were the following: 'upload photos and videos' was used the most with M=2.8085 followed by *Chat* (M=2.9786). And third was 'posting on friends' wall' with M=2.992. As for the "critics" level of participation, *Like* was used the most M=2.7286. In second place came the *comment* function with M=3.00. For the "joiners" tools the most used was 'join pages/groups' function with M=3.0214 followed by 'accepting friends' with M=3.078.

As for the functions associated with "passive spectatorship" participation, viewing the Timeline/newsfeed on Facebook scored the highest with M=1.4130. Then came viewing friends' photos and videos with M=1.4894, followed by scanning friends' status updates with M=1.5324. The top functions were those pertaining to "passive spectatorship", namely viewing others photos and videos, scanning their updates and viewing the timeline. The "critics" level of participation followed.

Results showed the majority of Lebanese Facebook users are accessing the service via mobile devices. Facebook mobile application enables users to "see what friends are up to", "share updates, photos and videos", "get notified when friends like and comment on your posts", "text, chat and have group conversations", "and "like" a friend's status or click through to a profile" (Facebook, 2012). The Timeline/newsfeed is the most important aspect of the mobile interface. Friends' photos are displayed on the Timline/newsfeed. It is probably faster and easier for Facebook users to browse through the mobile application's timeline/newsfeed and operate simple one button functions as upload photos/videos, browse friends status updates and read their comments, and activities, and eventually "Like".

Mobile access of Facebook render users to highly unlikely type in comments or provide any

written content, which can take up time, and might be frustrating with small keypads. Therefore, commenting and posting did not score as much as the non-active contribution uses.

Satisfaction

Participants agreed that 'Facebook meets their expectations' the most (M=1.9856 and SD=0.76125). In addition, the results showed that users are 'satisfied with the services that Facebook provides' (M=2.1560 and SD=0.67911). People believed that 'Facebook often gives them a sense of accomplishment' (M=2.3381, SD=0.92903). Participants often enjoyed using Facebook (M=2.4173, SD=0.74112) (refer to table 1.17).

Table 1.17 Satisfactions

	M	SD
Facebook meets my expectations	1.9856	.76125
Enjoy using Facebook	2.4173	.74112
satisfied with Facebook services	2.1560	.67911
Use Facebook more	3.9784	.87201
A sense of accomplishment	2.3381	.92903

Note.*1=very often, 2=often, 3=sometimes, 4=rarely, 5=never

Discussion

Social and psychological factors yield the patterns of Facebook behavior. Uses and Gratifications theory suggests that motivations express the various reasons users have for choosing the media, thus influencing their activity in content collaboration (Perse, 1990; Rubin, 2002).

This study concurred with the uses and gratification approach, Lebanese were using Facebook for various motives and reasons. The results supported the claims that individuals are satisfied in their usage of Facebook, which is capable of fulfilling their many needs. Moreover, Lebanese users are cognizant of their choice.

Granted that all Facebook users are active in the sense of registering and creating a profile, and logging in to their accounts as often, however beyond that level of basic activity, Lebanese Facebook users tend to be more passive users. Nonetheless, despite the use of passive Facebook functions and services, users, are still goal-driven in their choice.

Exploring the uses and gratifications of Lebanese Facebook usage and closely examining the reasons for choosing Facebook, this study provided an academic understanding and expanded the applications of uses and gratifications theory to Lebanese online media. The research revealed that Lebanese social media users adhere to the passive consumption model, and thus aptly choose to consume certain media messages and contents pertaining to entertainment and information seeking whilst being members of Facebook.

The results moreover affirmed some of the previous literature and research done in the field. This study concurred with Perse & Dunn's (1998) examination of the gratifications of computer use. Their study suggested that satisfying entertainment needs was the number one reason for using computers. Moreover, the results of this thesis agreed with Raacke et Al. (2008)

and their conclusion that uses and gratifications of Facebook are primarily related to keeping in touch with friends, and posting and looking at pictures (57.4%). This study however contrasted Kaplan and Haenlein's (2010) suggestion that social networking sites allow users participation and collaboration, thus providing democratized information through reliance on user-generated content. This research concluded that although Facebook provides the promise and tools for an active user collaborative participatory role as both content producer and distributor, users adhere to simply being passive spectators, thus utilizing Facebook as any other traditional media. This research confirmed that the number of social media spectators (passive consumers) is higher to that of active content producers (Bernoff, 2010).

In addition Facebook uses and gratifications results adapted those of mobile devices as Lueng & Wei (2000) concluded.

Furthermore, in the reviewed literature pertaining to participation, there emerged two views dismissing active participation, and suggesting passive consumption—Hindman and Žižek. Hindman did not define or explain what he refers to as content. His posited view of the highly educated professionals, who are the sole contributors of online content, is arguable. A plethora of generated content exists all over the Internet, and the creators, publishers, and distributors are anything but an elite niche. Furthermore, he claimed that people do not use the Internet in search of new information, but to consolidate and confirm what they already know (Hindman, 2008). This research yielded that Lebanese Facebook users sought to consolidate their relationship with their family members, friends, coworkers, and acquaintances, by using socialization and surveillance pertinent Facebook functions. This basically means Lebanese are using Facebook to concur with assumptions, opinions, and information they already know. However, Lebanese users did show interest in meeting new Friends on Facebook, although this

was limited to those who share their interests and inclinations. This study determined that Facebook users are generating content in the form of uploaded photos and videos, Likes, and comments. This disproves the generalization that Hindman (2008) proposed. Users publish content, however the nature or quality of the content is a different study and argument altogether.

Although in conceptual terms the technological structure of Facebook renders the social media service as active regardless of the user—Facebook compiles, updates, and publishes, even when the user is offline—Users are basically active in signing in and consuming the information that the platform has been acquiring for them. Facebook is a user-centered medium; Žižek simply looked at the technology behind the medium, which in the case of social media is the medium itself. Nonetheless, users have to log on to their Facebook accounts, which in itself is a form of active participation.

Gratifications of cognitive needs proved to be the most important motivation for using digital media and the Internet. Cognitive needs included: being informed, learning about new things, and surveillance. Facebook is built around communication, through user to user interaction, and reviews, information/surveillance, transmission of information and education, professional advancement, and customized search (West &Turner, 2000).

Keeping in touch with family, friends, and acquaintances, related to the social gratifications obtained. Facebook promises interpersonal communication and encourages socialization through self-expression, and relationship maintenance (Rafaeli & Sudweeks, 1997). Additionally, Facebook provided users with motivations that are not usually present in conventional media as audiovisual characteristics, anonymity, and interactive control.

As a premise of the uses and gratifications approach, media users ought to be well aware of why they choose to use a certain medium. Nonetheless such cognition is related to the degree of

fulfillment that the certain medium provides, the fact that users are actively engaged, and goal oriented.

Strengths

This research empirically gathered data on Facebook use, motivation, and participation directly from the Lebanese Facebook uses, thus avoiding any subjective bias that might possibly occur had content analysis been chosen instead.

Furthermore, any possible bias due to self-reports (surveys) is eliminated by the probability sampling method. Thus, the obtained results can be generalized to a bigger population.

Severin & Tankard (1992) criticize self-reports, considering them "a little simplistic or naive" (Ruggiero, 2000), whereas LaRose et al. (2001) deem them to being unreliable. The cognitive gap between the individual's actual behavior and perception of the behavior may weaken the validity of self-reports (LaRose, Mastro, and Eastin, 2001). Facebook however, involves high levels of cognition, and motivation. The operation requires users to be aware of their actions and multitask in browsing between chatting, messages, comments, checking pictures or videos, and so on. This proves to be rather different from consuming other more traditional media as television viewing, radio listening, and newspaper reading. For this very reason, self-reports of Facebook users would offer reliable data pertaining to this research.

This study measured the use of Facebook, both in terms of participation, and motivations, taking into account the functions and tools of Facebook. I explored users' behaviors across the major activities, which led to an understanding of Lebanese usage and participation motives.

Limitations

To eliminate any risk of errors due to an inherent cognitive gap between their actual behaviors and memories, a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methodology needs to be employed in future studies on Facebook participation. An increased sample size may generate more generalizable data for the population. Moreover, since motivations for media use are influenced by both external and internal factors, a longitudinal in depth analysis of such influences and behaviors is suggested. This study did not have the time or the resources to conduct such a prolonged in depth analysis.

Administering the survey virally in order to reach as many subjects as possible, thus increasing the sample size, and participants completing the survey independently online, might have influenced the outcome, due to external distractions, or technical faults. For optimum results I would suggest conducting the survey in a proctored supervised environment.

Future Research

As mentioned above, future research needs to employ a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methodology. Additionally, external and internal factors that influence motivations for Facebook use should be examined.

The reasons why people do not participate in Facebook, or why they deactivate their Facebook account deserves to be studied. Facebook has become one of the fundamental sources for social integration, information seeking, and surveillance online. The networking abilities, and the cognitive gratifications of Facebook usage render it an ideal marketing platform. Facebook pages may operate as a discussion forum between users and product suppliers (brands, companies, services, artists...). This allows such producers to enhance their products. In

addition, Facebook enables companies and brands to study and analyze how their image is perceived online via real-time feedback from the users.

A suggested area for future research is the marketing role of Facebook, the motives and gratifications related to consumer needs should be further investigated.

Recently, Facebook has been dealing with network crashing issues and security concerns, (hacks, breaches). A worthwhile future research as well, could be examining Facebook under the Technology Acceptance Model (O'Sullivan, 2008) in order to determine whether these logistic issues affect behavior and participation.

Conclusion

This study examined Lebanese participation in Facebook. The findings provide support to a significant amount of literature and existing research on social media. This research make significant contributions to understanding digital media and its influence on the communication process, by examining the different ways people use Facebook, the gratifications sought and obtained from the use, and comparing passive and active functions. Overall, Facebook users utilize the "view Timeline" and "viewing friends photos and videos" functions more than any other functions Facebook has to offer. In addition, Lebanese users are motivated to use Facebook for information seeking and surveillance, entertainment, and passing time. Finally the Lebanese passively participate in Facebook.

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Appendix A

Survey Script

I understand that all information I reveal in this study will be kept confidential. All data collected will be assigned an arbitrary code number rather than using a specific name or other information that could identify me as an individual. When the results of the study are published, only aggregate level data will be used. I understand that the data will be destroyed by shredding paper documents and deleting electronic files 5 years after the completion of the study.

I understand that this study is not expected to involve risks of harm any greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life. I also understand that it is not possible to identify all potential risks in any procedure, but that all reasonable safeguards have been taken to minimize the potential risks. I also understand that the only benefit of my participation is to help improve scientific understanding of the communication process.

I understand that participating in this study is completely voluntary and that I may stop participating in the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. I understand that all data collected prior to my terminating participation in the study will not be recorded.

All my questions about this study have been answered to my satisfaction.

Thank you for your time and interest! Please answer questions as they relate to you. For most answers, check the boxes most applicable to you or fill in the blanks.

1. What is your gender?

◯ Male

◯ Female

2. What is Your age ?

◯ Younger than 17

◯ 18-21

◯ 22-25

◯ 26-30

◯ 31-Older

3. Do you have a Facebook account?

◯ Yes

◯ No

If yes please resume taking the survey. If no then thank you for your time.

4. How long have you been using Facebook?

◯ Less than 1 year

◯ 1 - 3 years

◯ 4 - 6 years

◯ 7 - 9 years

5. How often do you visit Facebook per day?

○ 10+ times

○ 5-9 times

○ 2-4 times

○ 1 time

6. On average, how much time do you spend on Facebook per day?

○ 0-1 hour

○ 2-5 hours

○ 6-9 hours

○ More than 10 hours

7. How often do you access Facebook from the following locations?

	Very often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
From a home computer	○	○	○	○	○
From a work computer	○	○	○	○	○
From a school computer	○	○	○	○	○
From a laptop	○	○	○	○	○
From a mobile device (Tablet, iPad, phone..)	○	○	○	○	○

8. How often do you reply to other users' activity (comments, wall posts, video and photo uploaded, likes)?

○ Very often

○ Often

○ Sometimes

○ Rarely

○ Never

9. Approximately, how many content (wall posts, photo and video uploads, likes) have you contributed using your account so far?

○ Less than 50

○ 51 - 100

○ 101 - 200

○ 201 - 300

○ 301 -500

○ 501 or more

Uses and Gratifications of Facebook

10. On average, how many friends have you added without actually knowing who they are?

◯ None

◯ 1-2

◯ 3-4

◯ 5-6

◯ 7 or more

11. How many friends do you have on Facebook?

◯ Less that 10

◯ 10-50

◯ 50-100

◯ 100-150

◯ 150-200

◯ 200-more

12. How many groups have you joined on Facebook?

◯ None

◯ 5 or less

◯ 10 or less

◯ 15 or less

◯ 20 or more

13. How often do you join groups/networks relating to the following topics?

	Very often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Entertainment	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Interests/hobbies	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Family/friends	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Sports	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Education/academics	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Business	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Religion/spirituality	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Politics/politicians	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Technology/science	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Arts/culture	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Humor	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Work related	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Personal experience	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Uses and Gratifications of Facebook

14. How often do you use the following Facebook functions?

	Very often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Chat	O	O	O	O	O
Modify personal information if something has changed	O	O	O	O	O
Add friends	O	O	O	O	O
Change profile picture	O	O	O	O	O
Accept friends	O	O	O	O	O
Like	O	O	O	O	O
Join groups	O	O	O	O	O
Poke	O	O	O	O	O
Comment	O	O	O	O	O
Post on friends' wall	O	O	O	O	O
Change your status	O	O	O	O	O
Invite Friends to events or groups	O	O	O	O	O
Start new group	O	O	O	O	O
RSVP events	O	O	O	O	O
Start events	O	O	O	O	O
Tag	O	O	O	O	O
Participate in APPS (Tests, quizes, surveys)	O	O	O	O	O
Upload photo or video	O	O	O	O	O
View Timeline/Newsfeed	O	O	O	O	O
Scan friends' status updates	O	O	O	O	O
Update your own activities via your wall	O	O	O	O	O
Play games	O	O	O	O	O

Uses and Gratifications of Facebook

15. In this next section of the survey, you will find a number of potential reasons regarding why you use Facebook. Please read over each of the potential reasons and then select an appropriate response based on your level of agreement with that statement.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
To feel like I am part of a community	O	O	O	O	O
To provide information about myself	O	O	O	O	O
Because it is enjoyable	O	O	O	O	O
Because I can publish at any time	O	O	O	O	O
Because it is the thing to do	O	O	O	O	O
In order to find people who have the same interests with me	O	O	O	O	O
In order to promote myself and my work as a professional	O	O	O	O	O
Because I can post and share web contents	O	O	O	O	O
To learn about new technology/skills	O	O	O	O	O
Because it is easy to update	O	O	O	O	O
When I have nothing better to do	O	O	O	O	O
Because it helps pass the time	O	O	O	O	O
To keep in touch with my family/friends/coworkers	O	O	O	O	O
To share information useful to other people	O	O	O	O	O
To meet new people	O	O	O	O	O
To find information on my interests	O	O	O	O	O
To check what other people are up to	O	O	O	O	O
Because it is fun to try out new things like Facebook	O	O	O	O	O
To show my personality	O	O	O	O	O
Because I can access it wherever I am	O	O	O	O	O
To keep track of what is happening	O	O	O	O	O
To share my photos, reviews, videos, and other	O	O	O	O	O

interests

To see other people's opinions and contributions	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Because it allows me to get as much information out of the internet as I can	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Because It is a part of my online routine	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Because it is entertaining	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
To democratically express myself	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
To interact and discuss with other users	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Because it is socially engaging	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Because everyone else is on Facebook	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Because it makes me feel important	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

16. If you dislike something on Facebook would you post a comment saying so?

◯ Strongly agree

◯ Agree

◯ Neither agree nor disagree

◯ Disagree

◯ Strongly Disasgree

17. How satisfied are you with using Facebook? please check the option that best describes how you feel.

	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Using Facebook gives me a sense of accomplishment	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I want to use facebook more	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I am satisfied with the services that Facebook provides	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I enjoy using facebook	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Facebook meets my expectations	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Appendix B

Tables

Table 1.11 Frequency of Facebook Participation

	Frequency	Percentage
Experience		
Less than a year	2	1.3
1 - 3 years	16	10
4 - 6 years	72	48
7 - 9 years	51	34.0
Frequency of daily sign in		
10+ times	14	9.3
5-9 times	48	32.0
2-4 times	55	36.7
1 time	21	14
Time spent per day		
0-1 hour	50	33.3
2-5 hours	63	42
6-9 hours	20	13.3
10+ hours	6	4
Reply to other users' activity		
Very often	12	8.0
Often	35	23.3
Sometimes	50	33.3
Rarely	40	26.7
Never	3	2.0
Number of UGC entries		
Less than 50	12	8.0
51 -100	5	3.3
101 - 200	33	22
201 - 300	38	25.3
301-500	32	21.3
501 or more	21	14
Facebook friends		
10-50	4	2.7
50-100	9	6.0
100-150	29	19.3
150-200	43	28.7
200-more	54	36
Pages/groups joined		
None	1	0.7
5 or less	16	10.7
10 or less	27	18.0
15 or less	43	28.7
20 or more	53	35.3

Note.*1=very often, 2=often, 3=sometimes, 4=rarely, 5=never

Table 1.12 Location of Access

	Frequency	Percentage
From Home		
Very often	43	28.7
Often	24	16.0
Sometimes	19	12.7
Rarely	22	14.7
Never	29	19.3
From Work	5	3.3
Very often	7	4.7
Often	23	15.3
Sometimes	28	18.7
Rarely	75	50.0
Never		
From School	0	
Very often	0	
Often	0	
Sometimes	3	2.0
Rarely	9	6.0
Never	120	80.0
From Laptop	15	10.0
Very often	28	18.7
Often	19	12.7
Sometimes	18	12.0
Rarely	59	39.3
Never		
From Mobile Devices	52	34.7
Very often	32	21.3
Often	26	17.3
Sometimes	13	8.7
Rarely	18	12.0
Never		

Note.*1=very often, 2=often, 3=sometimes, 4=rarely, 5=never

Table 1.13 Topics of groups/pages

Topics	M	SD
Personal experience	3.4286	1.12616
Interests/hobbies	1.4113	.91082
Work related	3.3071	1.21677
Arts/culture	3.4823	1.18685
Family/friends	2.3786	1.33825
Entertainment	1.4214	.94502
Technology	3.6214	1.17815
Politics	3.7554	1.05530
Education	3.2518	1.28590
Business	3.1168	1.15724
Sports	2.8058	1.38772
Religion	3.3525	1.07584
	3.2429	1.09854

Note.*1=very often, 2=often, 3=sometimes, 4=rarely, 5=never

Table 1.14 Facebook Uses

Facebook Functions	Functions Score	
	Mean	SD
Social interaction	**3.4399**	**.542293**
Like	2.7286	.84686
Upload photo/video	2.8085	.80103
Chat	2.9786	.96312
Post on friends' wall	2.9929	.82668
Comment	3.0000	.75864
Add friends	3.0429	.70834
Accept friends	3.0780	.81127
Tag	3.2286	.90038
Poke	3.4892	.99540
Invite Friends to events or groups	3.6214	.90933
RSVP events	4.3688	.95925
Start new group	4.3929	.91113
Start events	4.8309	.53824
Surveillance/information seeking	**1.8277**	**.63948**
View Timeline/Newsfeed	1.4130	.70170
View others photos and videos	1.4894	.84191
Scan friends' status updates	1.5324	1.03771
Browse friends' profiles	1.7305	.92489
Join pages/groups	3.0214	.75358
Personal use/self expression	**2.7373**	**.89876**
Update your own activities via your wall	2.5390	1.08574
Change your status	2.6286	1.10813
Change profile picture	2.7410	1.10557
Modify personal information	3.0071	1.07900

Note.*1=very often, 2=often, 3=sometimes, 4=rarely, 5=never

Table 1.15 Degree of Participation

Participatory Levels	Levels Score	
	Mean	SD
Active Creator	**3.599782**	**.538741**
Upload photo/video	2.8085	.80103
Chat	2.9786	.96312
Post on friends' wall	2.9929	.82668
Add friends	3.0429	.70834
Poke	3.4892	.99540
Invite Friends to events or groups	3.6214	.90933
Start new group	4.3929	.91113
Start events	4.8309	.53824
Critic	**2.9903**	**.686968**
Like	2.7286	.84686
Comment	3.0000	.75864
Tag	3.2286	.90038
Joiner	**3.4857**	**.631407**
Accept friends	3.0780	.81127
RSVP events	4.3688	.95925
Join pages/groups	3.0214	.75358
Passive Spectator	**1.5292**	**.725751**
View Timeline/Newsfeed	1.4130	.70170
View others photos and videos	1.4894	.84191
Scan friends' status updates	1.5324	1.03771
Browse friends' profiles	1.7305	.92489
Join pages/groups	3.0214	.75358

Note.*1=very often, 2=often, 3=sometimes, 4=rarely, 5=never

Table 1.16 Facebook Motivations

Needs	Needs Score	
	Mean	**SD**
Social interaction		
To feel part of a community	2.4820	.89566
To find other people with same interests	2.4203	.73307
To keep in touch with my	1.5957	.65442
family/friends/coworkers	2.6014	.88408
To meet new people	2.7259	.88461
To interact and discuss with other users	2.1176	.85252
Because it is socially engaging	2.8986	.89842
Share information useful to other people	2.7372	.81593
Share photos reviews/videos/other interests	3.0791	.83462
Surveillance/information seeking		
To check what other people are up to	2.0368	.79263
To see other people's opinions	2.0507	.60801
Because everyone else is on Facebook	2.1460	.87900
To get the most out of the internet	3.3551	1.07256
To keep track of what is happening	2.2101	.80557
To find information of interest	2.5870	.94929
Personal use/self expression		
To provide information about myself	2.6691	.87135
To promote myself professionally	3.5683	1.27433
To show my personality	3.4667	1.04952
Because it makes me feel important	3.5662	1.03066
To post and share web content	2.8261	.92739
To democratically express myself	3.9778	.97327
Because I can publish at anytime	2.9065	.91598
Other		
It is easy to update	2.9130	1.00712
Because it is fun to try out new things	3.1942	1.01352
Because I can access it wherever I am	2.5639	.90749
Helps pass the time	2.1871	.90545
Because it is entertaining	1.6103	.66858
It is part of my online routine	2.0949	.74640

Note.*1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neither agree nor disagree,
4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree

Table 1.17 Satisfactions

	M	**SD**
Facebook meets my expectations	1.9856	.76125
Enjoy using Facebook	2.4173	.74112
satisfied with Facebook services	2.1560	.67911
Use Facebook more	3.9784	.87201
A sense of accomplishment	2.3381	.92903

Note.* 1=very often, 2=often, 3=sometimes, 4=rarely, 5=never