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Uses and Gratification Theory and Social Media Interactivity: A Demographic study in Lahore, Pakistan

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Abstract: This study looked at the usages and gratifications of social media interactivity between digital natives and digital immigrants. This study focuses to see if demographics such as age, education, and socioeconomic status have an impact on users also uncovering the possible reasons for social media usage among both generations based on their individual gratifications. The interview was conducted with a total of 16 participants in Lahore. They were picked based on their interest in social media and the consistency with which they interact with it. A semi-structured interview was conducted then analyzed using thematic analysis. Interaction of similar social media networks, apps, and platforms brings Digital Natives and Digital Immigrants closer together. Both generations choose to spend their time online and engage in social media interactions based on their own gratifications.

Key Words: Uses and Gratifications, Social Media, Interactivity, Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants.

Introduction

The new trend of social media sites is not just to share news and information, but it has also been discovered that people interact online with each other for reasons other than keeping in touch with their friends and families, indicating social media usage (Kasirye, 2021). The introduction of Social Media has altered consumers' communication habits. People who used to rely on traditional mass media to meet specific demands have shifted to using social media to meet those needs (Jan, Khan, & Mehsud, 2021). Researchers were driven to conduct studies to determine consuming styles and their impacts as a result of this paradigm change. In the subject of social media research, this study is a force to deal with usage among two different generations. To understand more about the growing trend of older adults using social networking sites,

researchers conducted in-depth interviews to find out why they use social presence and don't use privacy and preferences on Facebook (Jung et al., 2017). This study was prompted by a desire to learn more about how generational disparities among users influence how they utilize social media to achieve their interests. Uses and gratifications of Internet users, particularly scholars investigating social media, have created a number of pleasures that are strangely comparable to individuals gleaned through traditional media. As a result, the idea that media technology will affect user's needs, resulting in new and distinct gratifications, is growing rapidly (Kasirye, 2021). The term "social media usage" in this study refers to the combined impact of the consumer's age, education and availability of social media platforms, use, and utilization rate, SNS access, and usage objectives. Furthermore, the rate at which interaction platforms evolve

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has an impact on the nature of users as well as the dynamics of using the medium.

The revolution's problematic nature has surely sparked the curiosity of academics from numerous disciplines. However, there is a lot of good work on the subject in the social sciences. Likewise, discussions in this field rely on older people's access to the internet, as well as how they use it while they are online ([Whiting & Williams, 2013](#)). Despite the availability of a variety of new communication methods as, sending messages arises as the major and favored way of interaction. Older persons are less likely to use interactive social media networks, meaning that they are underutilizing new technology ([Green & Rossall, 2013](#)). In recent years, research has revealed generational differences: users from different ages may interpret and use Internet technology, in this equation, the younger generation is sometimes referred to as "Generation Y, Millennial, or digital natives." ([Iarrahi & Eshraghi, 2019](#)).

In today's studies, the distinction between digital natives and digital immigrants is a prevalent theme. According to [Prensky \(2001, 2012\)](#), who created the phrase "digital natives," users from the generation that grew up with considerable exposure to technology are more progressive than users from previous generations. He goes on to say that businesses will require new insights to meet the needs of a tech-savvy generation when they reach adulthood. Today, the first generation of digital natives is only starting to enter the workforce ([Philip & Zakkariya, 2020](#)). The youth usage of the internet and its expanding linked tools, such as interactive social media sites and Apps, has been the topic of substantial research. With the introduction of digital technology, academic scholars and marketing professionals are always seeking a deeper understanding of how information is generated and consumed, as well as the relationship between interactivity, user enjoyment, and adoption intentions. Nonetheless, user age has an impact on gratification with interactivity, with older "digital immigrants" preferring e-books and "digital natives" preferring interactive live sessions ([Kirk et al., 2012](#)). The study investigates the use of tablet computers and

their differential gratifications for information searching, relationship maintenance, enjoyment, and online time spent. Tablet usage is lowest among older persons and highest among Boomers and GenY ([Magsamen-Conrad, 2015](#)). Personal status updating is connected with community-building and interaction pleasure, according to an online poll of older adults (aged 60 and older) on Facebook profiles ([Jung & Sundar, 2018](#)).

This study seeks to explore gratifications based on social media interactions amongst two different generations, according to the following specific objectives:

- To explore digital natives and Digital immigrant's uses and gratifications of the social media interactivity in Lahore.

The participants completed the in-depth interviews, which were created with the purpose of answering the following research question.

Research Question

- Does social media interactivity gratify the needs of digital natives and digital immigrants in Lahore?

Given that age is not the only criteria that determine whether someone is a digital immigrant or a digital native, there is no clear year that determines whether someone born before or after that year is a native or immigrant. Intended for this study, natives are operationalized as individuals who grew up at a time when Facebook, the most popular social networking platform, was available to everyone.

Literature Review

The association between socio-demographic variables, abilities, and Facebook usage was investigated in this study. This study looked at the features that foresee Internet usage, based on the evidence that social media use may be viewed as the regular usage as differentiated applications of social media interactivity. Digital abilities were not linked to Facebook use after controlling for socio-demographics, according to [Correa \(2016\)](#). Furthermore, with

no gender differences, education and age were both adversely connected to usage frequency. That is, digital abilities were not shown to be a factor in the frequency with which people used Facebook. Additionally, younger people with less education used Facebook more frequently than those who were older and had more education [Kesharwani \(2020\)](#) stated that the key innovations and movements that occur during a generation shape that generation. Digital devices and pervasive technology have shaped the contemporary generation. In today's digitalized environment, new-age technologies have influenced everything from tablets to health apps for parents to children's computer games [Zur & Zur, 2011](#).

Communication, meetings, reading, gaming, and entertainment are just a few of our daily activities that have been digitalized [Prensky, 2001](#). "digital natives" & "digital immigrants" describe the current tech-savvy generation's behavioral preferences for using digital gadgets or technology. The goal of the study was to see how respondents' attitudes, beliefs, and self-concepts about social media interactions evolved as a result of their participation [Prensky, 2001](#). As a consequence of the study, the researcher was able to discover the communication habits of the two-generational cohorts, as well as how such behaviors influence their intergenerational communication via social media. An authentic exchange is seen to occur when social media communication allows users to interact on a personal level in a non-contrived and misdirection manner. Realistic and "genuine" social media communication is personal and intimate in character, disclosing details about a person, which can be difficult for a company to achieve [Dadzie, 2017](#).

Individuals are more likely to regard a company as real as they interact with it through social media channels, especially when the company provides timely, relevant, and thorough information to consumers through two-way conversational modalities [Men & Tsai, 2014](#). When colleges and universities use social media to build personal relationships with students, those interactions are regarded as genuine and significant, allowing the student to see the

institution as one that will help them reach their own educational goals. Students who want to examine the truth of the campaign promises by the institution on social media will form stronger bonds with an institution of higher education that presents itself honestly and realistically through social media [Lacka, Wong, & Haddoud, 2021](#).

Digital natives are constantly surrounded by technology, from online games and video recordings to smartphones and tablets that are always connected to the internet, whereas digital immigrants began using technology after their formative years, forcing them to learn how to adapt technology to life rather than understanding life through the lens of something like a context in which technology was integrated [Metallo & Agrifoglio, 2015](#). YouTube is one of the most popular websites among the general public, particularly among the younger generation. It is easily consumable for consumers due to the abundance of visual information in the form of movies, videos, documentaries, TV snippets, and other formats. Another element that attracts young people to YouTube is the ability to share locally produced visual content. People have developed the practice of uploading each and every self-produced film [Jan, Khan, & Mehsud, 2021](#). The major purpose of this study was to identify how digital natives and digital immigrants used the internet in relation to their own personal needs. 85.5 percent of those surveyed indicated they use the internet every day [Dadzie, 2017](#). Young adults spent a shocking amount of time on the internet. In comparison to prior reports that striking difference in Internet usage it's possible that maximum students have contact to use time as a result of this. Unrestricted Internet access across the entire campus. Interaction on social networking sites are two of the most important actions. When students use the internet, they habitually take their time [Salubi & Muchaonyerwa, 2018](#). Another study looks into the impact of online games on schoolchildren's intellectual performance in Lahore. It focuses on the accessibility, benefits, and use of online educational games among school-aged children, as well as their adaptation level. Two theories supported the study's theoretical foundations: uses and

gratification theory and cognitive development theory (Zia, Chaudhry, & Naz, 2019). Individual communication possibilities are getting increasingly boundless as info and communiqué technologies progress in this era. At any time, anyone can contact and follow them. Since the introduction of web 2.0 which allows for interactivity, social media has adapted much more common in everyone's life (Collins et al., 2011). People use social media to form social networks and sustain relationships, as well as to keep in touch with one another. As a result, it occupies a prominent place in people's lives (Eginli & Tas, 2018).

The social network site users look at social media as an expressive environment in which they can express and take ideas, as well as a means of alternative communication. Knowledge can be gained rapidly and globally is an important reason of individual satisfaction (Ngcongo, 2016). Social media platforms can be used for strategic aims as people can do whatever they want while having fun without stay at same place on video calls and interactions. According to studies, Facebook groups can help people achieve their needs for contribution, discovery, social connection, and enjoyment. Users are unrestricted on social media sites for explaining their feelings and use their self-expression according to their own reasons (Spiliotopoulos et al., 2013).

Theoretical Framework

As a result of these concerns, the Uses and Gratification theory (Katz & Blumler 1974) was proposed as a reaction to the media's absolute effect on audiences. The U&G tradition focuses on investigating people's media usage. Effects theory's uses and pleasure sub-genre focuses on the core, usage and pleasure define what draws youth to specific media and keeps them attached to such medium besides their contents (McCay-Peet, & Quan-Haase, 2016). However, it has been suggested that dealing with the concept of the active consumer to fully emerge interactivity of new media (Ruggiero, 2000). As current research on new media, particularly social media, has incorporated U&G to expound the attractiveness of social media networking

platforms (Valenzuela, Park, & Kee, 2009). These studies look at which social media platforms are the most popular and which are the least popular, as well as user preferences and social media's general attractiveness. People use social media for social interaction, relaxation, pass time, information seeking and sharing (Whiting and Williams (2013). The importance of social media to fulfill entertainment, information, and mood management needs, as well as the strengthening of social interactions, the availability and accessibility of virtual communities, and a venue for self-expression and actualization, is what gives it its worth. As social media has evolved into a new communiqué paradigm that allows users to produce, share, and generate material. The numerous types of social media like blogs have become progressively popular. The way individuals generate, evaluate, and distribute brief content is changing thanks to blog entries. The long-term success of blogs depends on users' continued content contributions. There is a scarcity of data on this type of user activity. Based on the uses and gratifications premise (Liu, Min, & Han, 2020). According to Shao (2009) users who are happy with their creations are more willing to contribute. That is, if a person gets more pleasure that social networking provides are more inclined to keep using it. U&G believes that if people are satisfied with their gratification, they will continue to supply content to microblogs, leading to the following hypothesis (Shao, 2009). In mass communications research, gratifications theory is a media use paradigm that generates motivation for media consumption and access (Rubin, 2009). Recent adaptations of U&G based studies are weak and lack online interactive gratifications, as well as new Internet-specific gratifications (Sundar & Limperos, 2013). When it comes to the future generation of the internet is the development of social media (Korhan & Ersoy, 2016). This research is explaining social media engagement through the use and enjoyment of various sites and applications. As a result, this article examines how and why people use social media. Also what sort of features make social media interactions appealing within the ideology of uses and gratifications.

Research Methodology

The qualitative intensive interview method was used in this study. The interviews were exact recorded and transcribed by the researchers. The NVIVO 12-Plus was used for analysis of qualitative data. Most of the qualitative research focuses on the interactional experiences, other views; in this study, researchers explore the feelings of two different age groups when it comes to using online mediums; it is necessary to explore the gratifications of their social media interactions. The study looked at what participants had to say about their social media contacts and networking experiences in their lives, both within and between generations. According to [Thelwall \(2021\)](#), quantitative researchers utilize a few variables and numerous cases, whereas qualitative researchers employ a few cases and many variables.

In the media, qualitative and quantitative strategies have been offered for achieving greater goals. In qualitative research, data is collected by direct observation in natural settings. Individual data is assessed in an anonymous and impartial manner. Qualitative research provides dimension to quantitative research by recognizing each subject's uniqueness and needing a researcher's participation a translation [\(Tonaka, 2015\)](#). Data from verbal interviews, focus groups, or textual sources, as well as data from newspaper diaries, video footage, and open-ended responses to quiz items, are frequently used to start thematic research. Interview data is routinely gathered through semi-structured interviews [\(Tonaka, 2015\)](#). This research will take place in Lahore. The participants in this study are all from Lahore. Demographic information on the participants can be found in the appendices. All participants were chosen based on their interest in social media engagement and the frequency with which they utilize it. We looked into how and why people use social media, as well as what characteristics make social media interactions via various sites and applications particularly desirable, from the viewpoints of uses and gratifications. This research also found that natives and immigrants had varied social media

preferences, as well as preferences for functionality and usability.

Findings and Discussion

Facebook has become a frequently utilized due to its interesting offers of share and like, it's a signal of positive sentiments and feeling about others. A thorough investigation is required to discover why and how users feel compelled to engage in 'liking' activities, as well as whether or not this is currently leading to a desire to utilize Facebook in the future [\(Hossain, Kim, & Jahan, 2019\)](#). Because of Web 2.0's rapid evolution and the continuous rise of many new trends in social media most of the scholars are focusing on media users from different aspects like their motivations, behaviors especially when using social networking sites to find out the immense use of WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter and other interactive available opportunities for the young [\(Tanta, Mihovilović, & Sablić, 2014\)](#). Given the broad use of social media, to examine how the relationship between demographic traits help to understand changes in online interactions over time. The Facebook and Twitter are considered most popular with new users joining them every day. People engage with one another to share information and influence their own friends or followers [\(Ilyas & Anjum, 2021\)](#). People who use both Facebook and Twitter are more likely to be successful, while those who only use Facebook report feeling less lonely [\(Petrocchi et al., 2015\)](#). Many features that allows users to express feelings about others posts or anything else that others do on social networking sites by clicking the "like" button is gaining popularity and acceptance.

Liking behavior on digital affordance of similar to greeting or waving through symbolic expression that allows users to communicate and connect on social media without using a specific language [\(Jan, Khan, & Mehsud, 2021\)](#). It has been discovered that younger generations (18-40) consider as digital natives priorities response time, navigation, and satisfaction, but older generations (40-60plus) as digital immigrants priorities interaction, memorability, and efficiency. To put it another way, younger generations have less patience than older

text with interactive features to convey tale and status. Instagram is used more frequently by digital natives. These days anyone, regardless of their age group, is looking for some form of entertainment or pleasure to help them relax after a hectic day. Users were drawn to social media interactions because of the freedom of expression they offered; the medium is so vast and diverse that it allows users to speak freely and explore the world according to their own preferences. *"I'm constantly excited and think this site must contain something fresh for me, as well as anything entertaining," one user remarked.*

Digital natives usually post their personal information, selfies, and check-in status on social media sites, and they feel better when people constantly compliment them, like their photos, and comment on them. A participant expressed her feelings regarding entertainment. *"I enjoy interacting with people on social media because it offers me satisfaction and is a fun way to relax and entertain myself."* This is the opportunity that social media gives users: they can use any information from any source to fulfill their own needs and gratification. *"The first benefit of using social media is connectivity. Social media can connect us to a number of people in no time thus information could be shared across the world and building relationships with each other also become easy."* Individual reasons for using social media sites vary, however most interviewees cited communication as a motivator, citing examples such as sharing and exchanging information to connect with friends, pastimes, family members bonding, preferred businesses, and so on. Aside from the desire to interact and socialize, there are other factors to consider. Some people use social media to pass the time. Others simply do not want to miss out on any intriguing debates. Surprisingly, both explanations have both good and bad components, whereas communication reasons are neutral. As a digital immigrant participant describes, *"It is not my routine, but whenever I feel free I check twitter any hour, I use twitter more because I am a journalist, so I use twitter to evaluate national, international affairs. It is a very fast flow of information, especially in twitter"*. Both groups of users understand the

reasons of their social media interactivity, but still they are confused about the time they spend on social media. *"Social media, in my opinion, has a significant influence on individuals all over the world. In fact, we have become so reliant on technology that we can no longer picture life without it."* According to researcher observation, whenever users get free or feel free for some time or moments, they unintentionally use social media, and many of them use it right after they awake in the morning or at late night before sleep. *"On average, I spend 7-8 hours daily on social media sites. Often it does affect my daily routines and my sleep routine as well. I'm usually half-asleep late at night while using my phone."* They are content with this and make every effort to avoid events that would interrupt their regular routine. One of the digital immigrant participants also talked about how much time he spends on social media on a daily basis. *"I believe I spend a large time on social media and have developed a habit of doing so; rather than seeing people face to face, I'm going to try to make new acquaintances through social media platforms."* One of them also claimed, *"Friends are irritated with me since I am not giving them enough time in this aspect."* When it comes to social media, interviewees have their own moods and facial expressions that they use to describe their feelings. *"Emojis are a fun way to express yourself."*

Initially, the researcher set out to discover the patterns of social media interaction between the participants. In this thematic analysis, the researcher found many interesting interactivity patterns among users, as earlier discusses, that depict the motives and needs of social media users for gratification. *"I feel lost if I have no chance to share my feelings on my social media sites; I write any my emotion to show my anger."* Social media is used by both groups of people from natives and immigrants for connectivity, socialization, entertainment, and awareness just because social media allow users to express freely firstly they joined due to the trend. *"I can write whatever I can fell on the social media. No, I don't think so one is responsible for its own feelings and expressions."* Further, this trend of usage leads them to achieve relaxation, motivation,

and happiness in their leisure, although some people also feel good in isolation because they are mentally busy with the global world via their social media accounts. *"I feel that something is missing, I feel that I'm alone and I'm lacking in something. I keep me in touch with others and keep me aware about world."*

During the interviews, it became evident that many users, particularly digital natives, used social media frequently without any proactive aim while feeling guilty about it. In contrast, according to the last quote from one of the digital immigrants, guilt had no impact on the amount of time spent. There should be no guilt if the user's motive for using social media is clear and relevant.

Conclusion and Empirical Contributions

[Weiser \(2001\)](#) stated that internet use according to uses and gratification conventions creates many social and psychosocial consequences that are largely firm by the user's own inspirations for the technology. People use social media for self-actualization, entertainment, and most of the time, interacting with others to strengthen social connections in virtual communities ([Shao, 2009](#)).

Self-expression had a favorable impact on users' that reported satisfaction among users, but privacy concerns also had a negative impact on them ([Shen, 2012](#)). The platform qualities of interaction, such as

accessibility and engagement, create an impact on users' feelings of pleasure ([Van Dijck, 2013](#)). This research contributes by addressing the user's theory in the field of social media gratification investigations. Interacting with different social media sites and apps, users have an opportunity to strengthen social relationships in virtual communities ([Ilyas & Anjum, 2021](#)). The findings show that social media has brought Digital Immigrants and Digital Natives closer together by connecting them through similar networks, apps, and platforms. According to the researchers, users want to spend their time online and enjoy social media interactions according to their individual gratifications; similarly, social media interactivity satisfies both groups of people. The researchers consider social media as a medium of interactivity between the two generations and also find out that spending more and more time on these online interactions somehow the generational communication gap is also creating because it lacks the social cues to adjust the behavioral and cultural components. The underlying disparity in intergenerational interactions is not just due to generational differences but also the personal and social integrative needs of digital immigrants & digital natives in Lahore. Due to utilization of the available cues while using a medium with fewer social cues than face-to-face connection.

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