Uses & Gratifications Revisited: A Test with Social Media Addiction in Contexts[*]

การทบทวนทฤษฎีการใช้สื่อและความพึงพอใจ:การทดสอบในบริบท
การเสพติดสื่อสังคมออนไลน์

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Abstract

This study seeks to revisit the importance of the uses and gratifications theory to social media. The respondents were Thai working adults who were aged between 25 and 44 years old, living in Bangkok. The quantitative methodological approach with online survey study was applied to reach working adults. From 402 working adults, only 300 were chosen due to completing the data; this demonstrated 74.63% of the total return rate. The Pearson's correlation, an independent t-test, and multiple regression, were employed to examine the hypotheses. The research findings revealed that Thai working adults strongly observe other people or watch what other people doing on social media rather than face to face. Surveillance and Convenience were the main motivations of social media users relates who suffered social media addiction.

Keywords: Thai working adults, Uses & Gratifications Theory, Social Media Addiction Contexts, Surveillance, Convenience

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บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษาครั้งนี้ผู้วิจัยต้องการทบทวนทฤษฎีการใช้สื่อและความพึงพอใจโดยการทดสอบในบริบทการ เสพติดสื่อสังคมออนไลน์ ของกลุ่มคนวัยทำงาน ว่าส่งผลกระทบต่อการเสพติดสื่ออย่างไรโดยใช้การเก็บข้อมูลทาง ออนไลน์เพื่อเข้าถึงกลุ่มคนวัยทำงาน และใช้การวิเคราะห์สหสัมพันธ์ การเปรียบเทียบค่าเฉลี่ย และ การวิเคราะห์ สมการถดถอยพหุคุณในการทดสอบสมมติฐาน ผลการวิจัยพบว่าคนวัยทำงานที่ใช้สื่อและพึงพอใจสื่อสังคม ออนไลน์ โดยเฉพาะผู้ที่ชอบสอดส่องคนอื่น และ ผู้ที่ชอบความสะดวกสบาย จะมีแนวโน้มที่จะเสพติดสื่อสังคม ออนไลน์มากกว่ากลุ่มอื่น

คำสำคัญ: คนวัยทำงาน รูปแบบการใช้สื่อและพึงพอใจ สื่อสังคมออนไลน์ ผู้ที่ชอบสอดส่องคนอื่น ผู้ที่ชอบความ สะดวกสบาย การเสพติดสื่อสังคมออนไลน์

Introduction

Social Media is a global consumer phenomenon (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011), and is revolutionizing consumer's behavior. Fundamentally, it is a communication tool powered by technology. It can make the opinions of some people – especially those considered 'in the know'– become extremely influential (Pandya, 2013).

Overall, social media has become a primary source of information among Bangkokians in recent years. With the dramatic rise in use of social media, so too has the number of people experiencing social media addiction. Social media addiction is a psychological and behavior craving to use the internet. The number of people addicted to Social Media has increased every year (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011). This paper applies uses and gratifications theory to investigate gender differences in usage patterns of social media, to examine the motives for using social media, and to determine which motives predict social media addiction among a selection of Bangkok's working population.

Literature Review

The present study investigated how uses and gratifications influence individuals' social media addiction among Thai working adults. Uses and gratifications theory (UGT) has been applied to study a variety of new media, including cellular phones, video games, and mobile applications (Leung & Wei, 2000; Lucas & Sherry, 2004; Sherry et al., 2006). The original purpose of uses and gratifications theory was to understand how people seek out specific content from each media outlet; that is, it sought find out if a particular medium could satisfy a particular need (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1974). Katz, et al.(1974) initially employed UGT to determine whether audiences are active and energetic, and whether they seek out media to

support their personal needs. This theory has since been used widely to observe the specific individual characteristics of media users. Some research has been performed in relation to the uses and gratifications of Facebook, MySpace, YouTube and Twitter. The factors of the model in relation to social media use were confirmed by research undertaken by Park, Kee and Valenzuela (2009) and Eastin (2002). Park, et al. (2009) found that the major uses and gratification factors of Social Media users were based on socializing, entertainment, self-status seeking, and obtaining information. LaRose and Eastin (2004) found similar factors, such as a need for information, seeking entertainment, and reaching social needs.

Time Spent inclines Towards Social Media Addiction

When people spend excessive time on a particular medium and it begins to interfere with their life, this time spend becomes what psychologists call "Social Media addiction" (Wilson, 2015). Researchers (Wilson, 2015; Kuss & Griffiths, 2011a; Wilson et al., 2010) identified social media as being far more severe in its potential for habit-fomation that alcohol or smoking cigarettes, and found that it affected a broad age-range, from children to adults.

The excessive use of social media services may create a need or desire for more usage. 'Addiction' is grouped into three levels: non-addicted, those people who spend between 1-3 hours per day; light-addicted, those people who spend between 4-9 hours per day; and, heavy addicted, those people who spend between 9-24 hours per day on social media. A recent report wrote about children and adults who spent more than five hours per day on Social Media as an addict (NookiiHugskater, 2013).

Time spent using social media was perceived to be less problematic for those people having ample opportunities for real-life interactions (Nyland, Marvez, & Beck, 2007). Opposing the findings of Echeburua and de Corral (2010), Nyland, et al. also asserted that excessive use of new technology may be particularly addictive to young people.

Gender difference in Social Media Addiction

Men and women may use technologies for different purposes. Kuss and Griffiths (2011a) found that women are often seen as having a higher risk than men for developing a potential Internet addiction. Anderson (2015), however, found that the two genders were not different, because men and women had a narrow gap for their social media usage . This study will, therefore, extend the existing literature by investigating whether gender influences Thai working adults' use of social media.

The uses and gratifications theory is applied in this research to explain why working adults choose to communicate via social media, rather than through media formats that are more traditional. Based on the literature, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H1: Women are more likely to become addicted than men.

H2: The more gratifications experienced by a person, the more addicted they will be.

H3: Time spent is the definition of addiction, then the extent of addiction leads to more negative behaviors

Research Methodology

This study employed a quantitative approach. G Power Software was used to calculate the minimum sample size for this study (Erdfelder, Faul & Buchner, 1996). The minimum sample size required for the study was 200. Anticipating a high non-response rate to the invitation to participate, the researcher chose to recruit two times as many participants as statistically needed, in order to attain a sufficient pool of respondents. Participants (N=300) were purposively recruited from social media (e.g. Facebook, Youtube, Twitter, etc) to capture people among the working Thai population aged between 25-44 years old.

An online survey tool (Qualtrics) was used to deliver self-administered questionnaires with closed-end and scale type format. The questionnaires were distributed online over a period of three months, April – to June 2015. There were three sections, including demographic information, general behavior and social activities on social media. Uses and Gratifications on social media was adapted from Whiting and Williams (2013), which contains 10 themes of 40 self-report items. The measure of social media addiction was adapted from scales reported by previous researchers Cabral, (2012); Ghohol, (2011); Sherman, (2011), which contains 34 items. Participants were requested to rate on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1=strongly disagree, to 5=strongly agree). The measures were translated into a Thai language version and reviewed by a bilingual Assistant Professor to ensure that there was an accurate and appropriate translation of the items. It took about 15 minutes to complete questionnaires.

Research Findings

Four hundred and two (402) questionnaires were distributed among working adults, 300 were chosen in order to exclude any missing data. Participants were assured of confidentiality, and their participation was entirely voluntary. A larger number of the respondents were female (67.3% or n=202) than male (32.7%   or n=98). Most of the respondents were between 25 to 44 years old, and that age range accounted for 76% of the

total participants. In terms of the different levels of education status, there were 275 people (01.7%) who held a bachelor's degree or above. There were 187 respondents (62.3%) who worked as an employee of a private company. With regard to a monthly income, 44% of the total respondents received a higher income from 60,000 baht and above; however, 19.7% of the total respondents received an income that was below 20,000 baht; 22.7% ranged between 20,001 to 40,000 baht and 13.7% ranged between 40,001 to 60,000 baht as an income per month. Therefore, the distribution of the respondents had more females, were highly educated, and were predominately employed by private companies and generally wealthy.

The independent t-test and Pearson's correlation analysis were used to evaluate Hypothesis 1: Women were more likely to develop Social Media Addiction than men were. The t-test found no significant difference between genders in addiction to social media. Female working adults were not significantly more addicted to social media than male working adults ($t = -.394$, $p > .05$). A positive correlation result would indicate a positive relationship between the variables, while a negative correlation value would indicate a negative relationship between them (Sekaran, 2003). A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between gender and time spent on each social media site and the results were these: Facebook (.02), YouTube (.05), Twitter (-.00), Instagram (-.01), Line (-.04), and WeChat (-.06) with p value of .71, .33, .88, .78, .41, and .26 respectively. This study found no significant relationship between gender and the excessive use of social media sites. Therefore, hypothesis H1 was not supported.

The regression models were used to evaluate hypothesis 2, the predictive power of each grafication factor for each of the kinds of social media addiction. The analysis revealed the model significantly predicted Behavior Addiction $R^2 = .180$, $F(5, 294) = 12.94$, $p < .001$. The standardized coefficients indicated that Surveillance ($\beta = .30$, $p = <.001$) was a stronger predictor of Behavior Addiction than Social Interaction ($\beta = .19$, $p = <.01$) and Convenience ($\beta = -.25$, $p = <.001$), but each significantly predicted Behavior Media Addiction. Neither Entertainment ($\beta = -0.11$) nor Relaxation ($\beta = 0.17$) predicted behavioral addiction. The model accounted for 16.6% of variance in Behavior Addiction.

Secondly, the analysis revealed that the 5.5% of the variance in Anxiety can be explained by uses and gratifcations factors, $R^2 = .071$, $F(5, 294) = 4.47$, $p < .001$. Surveillance ($t = 3.05$, $p < .05$) predicted Anxiety. The standardized coefficients indicated that Surveillance ($\beta = .19$, $p = <.05$) is a stronger predictor of Anxiety than Convenience ($\beta = -.17$, $p = <.05$), but

each significantly predicted Anxiety. The other uses and gratifications did not predict anxiety (Entertainment, β = 0.07; Social Interaction, β = 0.11, Relaxation, β = -.02).

Lastly, the model significantly predicted Preoccupation, R^2= .035, F(5, 294) = 2.11, p>.05. The standardized coefficients indicate that Surveillance (β = .14, p = <.05) is a stronger predictor of Preoccupied than Convenience (β = -.15, p= <.05). The other uses and gratifications did not predict anxiety (Entertainment, β = -.08; Social Interaction, β = -.01, Relaxation, β = .01).The model accounts for 1.8% of variance in preoccupation. In summary, Surveillance (β = .30, p = <.001) and Convenience (β = -.25, p = <.001) were the primary predictors in the model for Behavior Addiction, Anxiety, and Preoccupation. The independent variables explain a total of 16.6% of variance in Behavior Addiction. This result means that the more working adults are gratified by social media, particularly surveillance and convenience motives, the more his or her behavior will incline him or her to becoming addicted to social media. Hence, based on these results, the hypothesis H_2 was supported.

A Pearson's correlation analysis was used to evaluate Hypothesis 3: Time spent is the definition of addiction, then the extent of addiction leads to more negative behaviors. The Pearson's correlations between time spent on YouTube, Twitter, and behavior addiction were: r=.186-.200, p=.001-.003; Facebook was r= .169, p = .003 and We Chat was r=.125, p=.031 which are a positive correlation. However, the Pearson's correlation between the time spent on Instagram, Line, and We Chat was r=-.115 to -.148, p=.010-.047. which are a negative correlation with Preoccupied factor (see Table 1). This result means, overall, working people are likely to spend their time more on a social media site. The more time spent using social media, the more likely they will exhibit symptoms of social media addiction, hence the hypothesis was partially supported hypothesize 3.

Table 1: Correlation between social media sites and Social Media Addictions

Variable	Facebook	Youtube	Twitter	Instagram	Line	We Chat
Behaviour Addiction	r=.169*, p=.003	r=.186**, p=.001	r=.200**, p=.001	R=.090, p=.120	R=.050, p=.387	R=.125*, p=.031
Anxiety	r=.066, p=.257	r=-.001 p=.989	r=.036 p=.529	R=-.027 p=.637	R=.029, p=.616	R=-.018, p=.760
Preoccupied	r=-.021 p=.723	r=.045, p=.438	r=-.037, p=.522	R=-.148*, p=.010	R=-.115*, p=.047	R=-.142*, p=.014

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Conclusion and Discussion

In 2016, social media has reached 41 million active users or 56% penetration of Thai population (Social Baker, 2016). The present study investigated uses and gratifications motives that influence

individuals' social media addiction among Thai working adults. The results of the study did not support the first hypothesis, that women are more likely to become addicted to social media than men. The results showed that female working adults are not significantly (t= -.394, p> .05) more addicted to social media than male working adults. These results appear to contradict Cam and Isbulan (2012), who found that males scored significantly higher than females on the Facebook addiction scale.

The second hypothesis argued the more gratifications experienced a person, the more addicted they will be. The different uses and gratifications were entered as independent variables into the first block of a regression analysis, with different forms of addiction as dependent variables. The regression models were performed to test the association between the five gratification factors and the social media addiction. Surveillance and Convenience were the two predictors in the model for Behavior Addiction, Anxiety, and Preoccupied as the dependent variable. Surveillance is the strongest predictor. Thai working people may prefer to observe or know about other people by using social media. This is consistent with findings by Leung (2001), Jung, Kim, Lin, and Cheong (2005), Johnson (2008), and Sheldon (2009) who asserted that relaxation and entertainment purposes did not predict social media addiction. Convenience is the other predictor of social media addiction; when people feel convenience to use social media it can make them want to overuse it. This is similar to Basilisco and Kyung Jin (2015), who found that seeking convenience significantly affects Facebook usage. These

gratifications explain more variance in Behavior Addiction than the others. This result means that the more working adults are gratified with their social media usage, then the more they will be inclined, in his or her behavior. Thus hypothesis 2 was supported.

The third hypothesis was aimed to establish whether time spent led to more negative behaviors. The Pearson's correlation between time spent on Youtube, Twitter, Facebook, We Chat and behavior addiction are a positive correlation. However, the Pearson's correlation between the time spent on Instagram, Line, and We Chat which presents a negative correlation with preoccupation. With all things being considered, then the hypothetical model of this study is worthy of some further analysis. Use of Line and We Chat is aggressively growing in Thailand. Furthermore, messaging apps account for 50% time spent (Leesa-Nguansuk, 2014). On the other hand, Instagram is simple and provides a seamless shopping experience users (Hutchinson, 2016). Overall, though, the more time spent using social media, the more likely people will exhibit symptoms of social media addiction. Hence hypothesis three was partially supported hypothesize 3.

The findings of this study should be considered in light of the study limitations. Almost 70% of the respondents were female so the generalizability of this study might be restricted only to female opinions, having not had an equal response coming from males. Hence, further research projects would need to recommend increasing the male sample size and probability sampling in order to generalize the overall, all-inclusive representative population. With the growing awareness of social media addiction, future researchers can extend their studies to others provinces of Thailand, or even select another country, in order to see the difference of how cultures can potentially cause certain factors that can lead to social media addiction.

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