Reading Motivation of Online News among Youth in Sub-Urban Area

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Abstract
In studying Internet, we need to take account for differences in places. This is because the Internet affords to show different patterns in which people in different types of places access and use the Internet. Meanwhile, many current studies proved that people increasingly turn to the Internet for daily news and this trend also included youth as one of the increasing readers. Therefore, we seek to explore the gratifications gained by youth through reading online news by specifically focusing youths in suburban area. Findings through survey among 300 youths in Perak, Malaysia suggested that reading online news and youth is not a new trend anymore and all online news publishers need to reconsider some betterment in order to produce better online news in future.
Keywords: Internet, Gratification, Online News, Youth, Suburban

Introduction
In Malaysia, the decision made by the Mahathir's administration that the Internet will not be censored has given rise to the flourishing growth of online newspapers (Samani et al., 2015). It triggered the mainstream press to pioneer the approach of introducing online news portals, such as, The Star Publications, which was the first to introduce an online newspaper called the Star Online in 1995, and then followed by others such as the *Utusan Online, Berita Harian Online*, and *New Straits Times Online* (Kasim & Sani, 2016). However, it is important also to stress that the rapid development of these online news were due to the response by the online news readers.

Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) (2015) reported in their Internet Users Survey 2014, that the most Internet users in Malaysia encompasses Malaysian higher education students who are normally around 20-24 years old. Then, a survey done by DiGi et al (2015) showed that internet penetration in all states in Malaysia is high, and the state with the highest percentage of students who use the internet is Perak which is 98.5%.

Previously, Wok et al (2011) found that TV is perceived by Malaysian university students as the most credible mass media, followed by the newspapers, and then the Internet. This is due to the fact that the current news on national and public affairs disseminated by both media are perceived as reliable.

Later, Freeman (2013) found that most Malaysian university students choose the Internet as their main source of news. Ayub et al. (2014) further stressed that the Internet is widely used by Malaysian students in universities to seek relevant information and materials to complete their assignments or projects. In terms of Internet use for academic purposes, students in social sciences, agriculture and computer sciences scored the highest.

Here, we can assume that the positive response of university students is undeniable and this encourages the emergence of online news. As mentioned by Samani et al (2015), the rise of new media today is due to the desire of public in searching different source of information about realities happen in everyday life. From socializing online, to recreational Web surfing, to academic uses, students are comfortable using the internet as an information resource, a medium through which to pursue relationships and a source of entertainment (Jones et al., 2009). According to Wu (2014), information-seeking involves reading online news, Wikis, and relevant coursework positively predicted student performance.

However, we should concern also that there are various barriers face by students while reading online news. Chiou & Tucker (2013) stressed that younger readers are more price sensitive, and as we all know, several large players in the media industry, including News Corp and The New York Times, have moved from providing online content free of charge to implementing 'paywalls' where readers are charged a fee for accessing content online.

As found by Akanda and Haque (2013), major problems students are facing include frequent interruption of power supply, low speed of Internet, high cost of Internet subscription, etc. It is undeniable that all these problems that can be found in rural areas, but it might also exist in sub-urban areas.

Reading Online News in Suburban Area

Suburban offers different qualities with urban and rural environments, particularly in terms of scenery, peacefulness, lifestyle and community life. However, like urban and rural, suburban regions also present challenges to those who live, work or study there.

Stern et al. (2009) who investigated the implications of place (geography) on TRTR digital inequalities and found that limited access to advanced technologies in rural areas affects the proficiency and use of the Internet for economics and other daily activities by rural dwellers when compared with individuals from suburban and urban areas.

When the Pew Internet & American Life Project first began surveying the Internet landscape in early 2000, 51% of urban residents were online, while 55% of suburban residents were online. But, when data collected between March and August 2003, data changed where 67% of urban residents use the Internet, while 66% of suburban residents use the Internet (Pew Internet & American Life, 2004). Even the difference is just a little, but it is interesting to know why suburban residents are decreasing online.

In 2012, Pew Internet & American Life Project found that those who live in suburban communities are like urbanites, which most of them are heavy digital participators who comment and share the news. However, these suburban residents rely mainly on the internet for information about local restaurants, businesses, and jobs, and they look to television news for weather and breaking news.

These previous findings proved the existence of difference pattern in using Internet generally and motivation to use news specifically, between urban and sub-urban communities. Then question arise, if previous studies have found university students as using online news extensively, then, does the frequency will be difference if university students study in sub-urban area. After that, it would be interesting also to find out whether the frequency to read online news is due to different motivation.

To answer these questions, this current study deployed uses and gratifications (U&G) theory as the theoretical framework because U&G is among the theory that has been applied extensively in studying the need and motives behind traditional and online media usage (Florenthal, 2015), with specifically focusing on four major motivations of using the Internet introduced by Ko (2002), which is information, convenience, entertainment and social interaction. Specifically, this study focused on:

Research Question 1:
What is the frequency of reading online news in suburban area?

Research Question 2:
Do motivations lead to the frequency of reading online news?
Hypothesis 1: Social interaction leads to the frequency to read online news.
Hypothesis 2: Convenience to the frequency to read online news.
Hypothesis 3: Entertainment leads to the frequency to read online news.
Hypothesis 4: Information leads to the frequency to read online news.

Methodology

As mentioned previously, DIGI et al (2015) found that internet penetration percentage is the highest in Perak which is 98.5%. Meanwhile, MCMC also reported that higher education students is the highest Internet users in Malaysia, who are normally around 20-24 years old.

Therefore, this current study targeted 300 university students in Perak, who specifically stay and study in in suburban areas around Kampar, Kuala Kangsar, Tapah, and Tronoh. Survey questionnaires have been distributed following purposive sampling technique, where each respondent must fulfill certain criteria that includes: university student, and age around 20-24 years old.

Data gathered involved 153 male and 147 female who come from different courses and ethnics. Data were then analyzed by using SPSS to get the percentage, mean and Pearson correlation. Cronbach's alpha, reliability statistics was computed for those variables measuring each motivation. Alphas above 0.70 was acceptable since those coefficient values are generally reliable (Pallant, 2013).

Findings and Analysis
1) Frequency of Reading Online News in Suburban Area

Data in this current study proved that 11% of the respondents prefer to read printed newspapers compared to 49.7% who prefers to read online news. Another 39.3% chose to

read both types of newspaper. This result is similar to Mathew et al.'s (2013) who also found that minority of the research respondents prefers to read printed newspaper.

However, we can assume that the combination of respondents prefer to read online news and they prefer to use both methods. This proved that majority of respondents have positive perception toward reading online news. This finding is relevant to be connected with results found by Freeman (2013) where university students in Malaysia are fairly intensive users of online news sites with more than half of the respondents read online news regularly.

Meanwhile, the reasons to use both methods is connected to Struckmann & Karnowski's (2016) study where newspapers are more often used in the early morning hours, and their non-usage decreases significantly in the late hours after 6pm, presumably when their content is not up-to-date anymore. Besides, as a student, respondent must be alert with all types of sources in getting credible information. Both print and online news can be considered as complementing each other in providing information to the readers.

Findings in Table 1 showed that majority of university students in suburban area read online news once a day, which is 23%. Then the second highest is 18.7% who reads online news several times a week. This data proved that even in suburban area, university students still have high frequency in reading online news. Previous finding by Freeman (2013) found similar results where university students between 20-24 years old is the group that regularly reads more online news than other groups of age.

Table 1
Frequency of Reading Online News

	Frequency	Percentage
Several times a day	52	17.3
Once a day	69	23.0
Several times a week	56	18.7
Once a week	48	16.0
2-3 times a month	29	9.7
Once a month	8	2.7
Less often than once a month	11	3.7
Don't know	27	9
Total	300	100.0

Another interesting data found in this current study is dependency on Internet between male and female university students. The data found it contradictory with findings by Jones et al. (2009), where male students spend more time online than their female counterparts. Then, latest study by Ang (2017) found that female adolescents spent longer hours communicating online. However, the current study found a small gap between gender regarding their dependency on Internet (refer Table 2) which might be due to locations of universities.

Table 2
Dependency on Internet

		Internet		Total
		Yes	No	
Gender	Male	121	32	153
	Female	138	9	147
Total		259	41	300

As university student, respondents depend on Internet with so many reasons especially related to academic matters. Other than that, the environment of suburban areas also able to encourage them to go online in order to fulfill their needs such as to keep updated with current issues like sports and fashion. Therefore, it is undeniable to say that the small gap exists in this current study is due to the ability of Internet in fulfilling the needs of both gender. However, those that chose not to depend on Internet might be assumed as those who are able to manipulate indoor and outdoor activities to fulfill their needs, such as joining football team to attach with friends, and to utilize leisure time.

2) Relationship between Frequency and Motivations to Read Online News
Table 3 shows that the highest mean value for motivation is convenience which is 3.46, and the lowest value of mean is entertainment, 3.11. The selection of convenience as a main motivation to read online news is undeniable because online news is a form of information that easy to get and read at anywhere and anytime compared to print newspaper that need money and time in order to get it. Furthermore, most of online news also did provide link to other websites that relevant to the news content which also ease the effort of students to get additional information.

We should understand that an urban area is a set of municipalities made up of an urban center with more than 10,000 jobs, where the distance between buildings is equal to or less than 200m, while a suburban area is a residential area within commuting distance of an urban center and connected to it by public transportation and main roads (Morganti et al, 2014), however, despite all the trends towards urbanization, suburban is still much less capable in providing the population, such as in term of jobs, schools and child-care facilities, retailing, recreational facilities, public transport, and medical care, and brings more difficulties for the suburban population where inconvenience situations especially involving longer journeys, more expensive transport, and less choice in activities (Hesse & Scheiner, 2007). Due to this, the tendency for university students to read online news due to convenience motive is acceptable.

Table 3

Motivations to Read Online News

		SOCIAL INTERACTION	CONVENIENCE	ENTERTAINMENT	INFORMATION
N	Valid	300	300	300	300
	Missing	0	0	0	0
	Mean	3.23	3.46	3.11	3.45
	Std. Deviation	.885	.976	.847	.978

Level indicator for mean value: low=0.1-2.99, moderate=3.0-3.49, high=3.5-5.

However, in order to examine the relationship between frequency of reading online news and motivations which is information, convenience, social interaction, and entertainment, Pearson correlation analyses were conducted to determine what relationships existed between these variables. Stacks and Hocking (1999; p. 349) stated that, correlations below ± .30 are "weak", between ± .40 and ± .70 are "moderate", between ± .70 and ± .90 are "high", and above ± .90 are very high.

Therefore it was found that even the frequency in reading online news is high among respondents, however, the relationship between frequency and all motivations have weak correlation which is below ± .30. This means, there is high frequency to read online news but is not highly motivated by information, convenience, social interaction, or entertainment.

The strongest relationship exists between frequency and motivation to get information (.300), which have been proven by few previous studies about what drives students to use online news, such as to obtain information on public affairs, politics/governments (Akanda & Haque, 2013), and want to be updated (Mathew et al, 2013).

The weakest relationship is between frequency to read online news and motivation to get entertainment (.157). This result is relevant because entertainment can be gathered on Internet through different type of forms which is better than online news, such as music and movies.

Here, we can conclude that even information has weak relationship with frequency, but still motivation over the information gathered from online news can be considered as important (refer Table 4). This situation could be due to their responsibility as student which needs them to focus in academic-related activities and by reading online news, respondents able to search and get information, such as online journal or book, as instructed by lecturers. It is undeniable also to say that online news can be reached at any time with easy devices such as through mobiles, tabs etc., and less effort is needed especially when it has function that linked to other relevant websites.

Table 4
Motivations and Frequency to Read Online News

		FREQUENCY
SOCIAL INTERACTION	Pearson Correlation	.203**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	300
CONVENIENCE	Pearson Correlation	.282**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	300
ENTERTAINMENT	Pearson Correlation	.157**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006
	N	300
INFORMATION	Pearson Correlation	.300**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	300

Interestingly, while computing the correlations between frequency and motivations, correlations were also discovered among the motivations. Some statistically significant relationships emerged among the work categories that are worth mentioning for purposes of research, such as a strong relationship between convenience and information (r = .827); between entertainment and social interaction (r = .799); and between convenience and social interaction (r = .743).

Conclusion

In discussing frequency of reading online news, this current study found that majority of the respondents know what online news is and will read online news at least once, though some agreed that they still want to read printed newspaper. However, most of them agreed that they have gained gratifications through reading online news.

The outputs of this study proved that there is motivation to read online news among sub urban communities, especially university students. Therefore, it is important also for higher education institutions in sub-urban and rural areas to consider the development of technology and Internet facilities as parallel with the development of teaching and learning activities.

The government also needs to ensure that the development of the digital society must be accessible to all Malaysian citizens. We should understand that assignments, projects and other kind of activities involving students will need them to be updated with current news and information.

Limitations and Recommendations

This current study focused only to university students, while ignored school students who are also included in the group of highest Internet user as stated by DiGi et al (2015). Even the purpose in selecting university students is clear which is their high involvement in reading online news as mentioned by many previous studies, it would still be interesting for future researchers to focus on school students. Other than that, future researchers may also attempt to test motivation to read different types of online news because different news might have different kinds of attraction.

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