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Kelly M. Bodine
kmb5929@rit.edu

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Rochester Institute of Technology

School of Communication

College of Liberal Arts

College Students' Use of Digital and Traditional Media: Uses and Gratifications Approach

by

Kelly M. Bodine

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in partial fulfillment of the Master of Science degree

in Communication & Media Technologies

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The members of the Committee approve the thesis of

Kelly M. Bodine presented on March 23, 2018.

_____

Andrea Hickerson, Ph.D.
Associate Professor and
Director
School of Communication

_____

Grant Cos, Ph.D.
Professor of Communication
Director for Graduate Programs
School of Communication

_____

Kelly Martin, Ph.D.
Professor of Communication
School of Communication
Thesis Advisor

_____

Stephanie Godleski, Ph.D.
Professor of Psychology
Department of Psychology
Thesis Advisor

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GRATIFCATIONS APPROACH

Kelly M. Bodine

School of Communication

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Master of Science in Communication & Media Technologies

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Abstract

In the higher education field marketers need to better understand how to keep abreast with the trends of their current and future audiences. With ever-evolving technologies, students' have multiple methods in which to acquire campus related information. The aims of this study were to discover what communication methodologies students employ when learning about campus information and what methodologies they employ when actively searching. Based on a uses and gratifications framework, this study involved conducting an online survey to compare college students' use and level of influence from traditional or digital media marketing. The findings of this study show that both past and present methods of marketing communications' are utilized to search for information, with different intentions on each. This survey specifically explored the use of media among the student population at the Rochester Institute of Technology.

Keywords: traditional media, digital media, marketing, higher education, uses and gratifications

College Students' Use of Digital Media and Traditional Media:

Uses and Gratifications Approach

Past communications technologies have served as the catalyst for how marketers influenced the information consumption of mass audiences. History has shown that new media borrows and refashions the representations of older media, and with the introduction of each new communication medium came adjustments in new marketing strategies for advertisers. Johann Gutenberg's development of movable type in 1450 made mass printing and, hence, mass advertising possible, desktop publishing materialized in 1985, making great strides for print advertising, while the arrival of the Internet provided a viable tool for e-commerce (Eridon, 2012). Similar to how past technologies influenced marketers, the entry of advanced digital media has reshaped the marketing and advertising landscape yet again. Traditional marketing efforts and their effectiveness have been able to adjust throughout the years, but with the present day mobility of digital devices, the aforementioned marketing efforts cannot accommodate these communication channels on mobile technology.

In the rapidly developing digital landscape, there is an extensive variety of media channels to obtain information, engage with others, and fulfill personal needs. The Internet and its mobility is becoming the resource of choice for information seeking among people, especially for younger age groups who have been exposed to this type of technology for most of their lives (Christ, 2005, p. 5). Hundley and Shlyes (2010) defined digital devices as technologies such as iPods, cell phones, computers, and video game systems. Marketers previously reached their customers most often at home through the use of traditional media, but with today's mobile devices, marketing professionals have a more challenging time reaching their audiences. With this advancement in technology, it shifts control from the marketer to the consumers as

consumers' can choose more effortlessly what information they receive, making their social world highly customized (Mulhern, 2009).

The evolving digital devices have re-sculpted people's habits and transformed the development and understanding of such skills including information searching. According to a study by Roberts, Foehr, and Rideout (2005), "media multitasking" is not uncommon among younger generations with one quarter to one third of all 8-18 year-olds simultaneously using another communication channel while listening to music, using computers, reading, or watching TV. The volume of media content and services are thriving rapidly at a rate where new information online is essentially unlimited (Anderson, 2009). Coupled with the surrounding digital environment, both old and new media are increasingly available at the consumers' fingertips, allowing a user to move easily from one subject of interest to the next. The breach between limitless media and limited attention means it is harder for marketers to attract meaningful public attention (Webster, 2011, p.44). As a consequence, marketers, particularly in the higher education field, need to improve their methods of advertising and information dissemination to match the media behaviors of their audiences. By keeping up in this infinite trend, colleges can shape not only classes, but also non-academic services to continually meet the changes of this movement.

Understanding how digital media affects people's behaviors of actively participating in media consumption will contribute to teaching methodologies, relating both to style and finding activities that will improve attention and performance among students. If too much information is presented in a day and if it is poorly organized it can obstruct the likelihood that a student's learning will occur inhibiting their motivation and engagement (Hogg & Eckloff, 2008). For decades, professionals and scholars alike have studied how digital technology has accelerated or

inhibited students' engagement in terms of teaching and learning methodologies. However, student engagement is multidimensional. Information dissemination from a college campus is a crucial and integral part of a student's life while attending a university. Whether it is academically related or not, various departments, professors, and groups on campus have events, information, and news that needs to get in the hands of college students. Therefore, this study focuses on the motivational reasons behind what media students use when finding campus related information.

Literature Review

Prior research has suggested that people have fundamental needs that relate with personal characteristics and social surroundings. These surroundings produce problems and alleged solutions, which serve as the basis for different motivational behavior that can come from using the media (Ruggiero, 2000). Stemming as a theoretical approach from media effects research of how society and media interact, the uses and gratifications theory (McQuail, 2010) revolves around the sender and the message, with focus on the active user. According to Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1973) the uses and gratifications theory is best described as the attempt to explain "the social and psychological origins of needs which generate expectations of the mass media or other sources, which lead to differential patterns of media exposure, resulting in need gratifications and other consequences" (p. 510). At the core, uses and gratifications are used to explain and understand the functions of why people actively choose which medium and its content in order to satisfy personal needs and to achieve their goals.

Appropriately, previous research using the uses and gratifications theory have been applied to traditional communications media. Leung and Wei (2000) discuss research on the conventional telephone, for example, to show the differentiated motives of intrinsic or social and

instrumental or task-orientated motives. Results indicated that people used the telephone

"socially" to reduce loneliness and anxiety, and to maintain relationships with family and

friends, and "task-oriented" to order products or schedule appointments. Towers (1985)

considered the use of radio news in relation to other media, finding that people who listened to

the radio more frequently did so for the immediacy of news and entertainment. Uses and

gratifications have been used to examine the purposes of television home shopping. Cortese and

Rubin (2010) demonstrated how television viewing fulfilled the personal needs of relaxation,

entertainment, excitement, and escape, while home shopping provided users with brand

information, convenience, and combats dissatisfaction with the malls. More recently, scholars

have recognized the importance of applying the uses and gratifications theory to MP3s and

iPods, finding that younger generations resort to these tools as ways to diffuse boredom, help

with stimulation, and as a means of escape and relaxation (Ferguson, Greer, & Reardon, 2007).

In all of these research studies, prior conditions led to individual needs, motives, and behaviors,

which produced outcomes. By using the uses and gratifications theory to depict how individuals

used traditional media to satisfy their motives, these results can provide insight to present day

digital media use.

Digital technologies present people with more media choices and introduce three

additional aspects of the uses and gratifications theory that before could not be as easily applied

to traditional communication: interactivity, demassification, and asynchroneity (Ruggiero, 2000).

Ha and James (1998) identified five dimensions of interactivity: playfulness, choice,

connectedness, information collection, and reciprocal communication. The concept of

interactivity can be applied to newer digital devices because it involves the amount of

communication media alternatives users are currently presented with, the amount of effort a user

must employ to access desired information, and how actively a medium is to its user. Demassification refers to the amount of control the user has over the selected communication medium so messages can be individualized and tailored to ones needs, while asynchroneity refers to the feature of convenience people are given from digital technology, allowing much more regulation and flexibility than that of traditional methods. For example, a user can record a television program for later viewing or they can respond to a message when they find it is a suitable time for them (Ruggiero, 2000, p. 15-16).

New media is becoming a significant element in young people's lives and the relationship between the user and these digital devices has become the domain of popular culture (Greenhow & Robelia, 2009). This relationship to digital media is a social factor that fosters and guides user behavior because of the mobility and convenience that it brings. More recently, the uses and gratifications theory has been applied to the more commonly used telephone, the cell phone. The cell phone has supplemented the role of the fixed telephone in meeting individual needs for relationship maintenance. It also adds to a person's symbolic community for those who might not have been socially well connected before, and now these individuals can fit into this fashion trend. Furthermore, mobility was identified as an additional gratification among cell phone users that was not previously recognized with the traditional telephone (Wei & Lo, 2006, p. 63-68). Another popular and well-integrated tool in young people's lives are social networking sites, including the most widely used site, Facebook. Urista, Qingwen, and Day (2009) found five gratification themes for using social networking sites, including efficient communication, convenient communication, curiosity about others, popularity, and relationship formation and reinforcement. Such gratifications are now only obtainable through the use of the Internet and digital media.

Stemming from the newer gratifications identified from the use of digital media, it is

apparent that new technology brings new gratifications. Sundar (2008) has shown four

technological affordances from digital media that for this study may relate to information

seeking, similar to how Sundar and Limperos (2010) used this model to explain new media

gratifications. These affordances include modality, agency, interactivity, and navigability.

Modality relates to how the Internet can show information in a multimedia way including text,

audio, pictures, and video. This presents information in a more convenient and visually appealing

way evoking users' visual responses and enhancing the experience. This modality can be quite

influential when a user makes the decision of which content to consume (Sundar & Limperos,

2010, p. 13-14). The agency affordance allows individual users to be their own gatekeeper of

information where users can assume the role of agents or sources of information. Content tends

to be chosen when a user sees that the online community rated particular information highly as

well (Sundar & Limperos, 2010, p. 14-16). Interactivity speaks to interface features offered on

digital media that allows for individualized participation. For example, according to

athome.starbucks.com, Starbucks allows a user to know which kind of coffee he/she is most

likely best suited for, based on a Perfect Coffee quiz (Coffee at Home, 2016). This type of

engagement can make information content appear better and give certain levels of entertainment

to a user. This can create a positive impression about the nature of the content, therefore

encouraging a user that it is acceptable to trust the content (Sundar & Limperos, 2010, p. 16-17).

The navigability affordance is another essential tool that digital media must offer because it

allows the user to freely navigate from one site to another with ease, presenting personal

satisfaction, and presents the opportunity of holding the user to a site longer. This assists the user

with surveillance while searching for information, granting the individual the power to search for

their best options when planning a trip, or purchasing a brand of products, among other things (Sundar & Limperos, 2010, p. 18-20).

Past scholarly research has indicated that culture and technology influence each other's progression, and both influence marketing efforts, and others that have evolved. Investigating this culture paradigm can be advantageous to communication researchers as they try to outline possible long-term consequences of Western cultures' persistent engagement with digital media, and how it affects marketers and advertisers. Marketing communication needs to integrate new media for branding, message formation, and channel purposes. By taking a closer look at the distinctive characteristics of new digital media and at the way people are engaging with these media, this study can bring about new techniques to effectively and efficiently reach a mass audience. Specifically, professionals in the higher education field can better understand how it affects students' engagement. As aforementioned, past professionals and scholars alike have studied how digital technology has affected students' engagement in terms of teaching methodologies. However, beyond educational engagement is social engagement. During a student's learning process both types of engagement work together formally and informally in ways that generate higher student retention and success as whole. For purposes of this study, student engagement is defined as the ways "in which school leaders, educators, and other adults might 'engage' students more fully in the governance and decision-making processes in school, in the design of programs and learning opportunities, or in the civic life of their community," (Hidden Curriculum, 2014, August 26).

Continued changes in the patterns of media used by younger generations will have important implications on the future life of traditional media. It will help to discover motives and selection patterns of audiences with each new media. In addition, continued emphasis on the uses

and gratifications theory must progress, particularly by scholars who wish to continue to develop this theory (or other theories), that will explain and predict media consumption by the public. Understanding digital behavior will also help health practitioners in comprehending a patient's self-efficacy in searching for personal health information (Rains, 2008). In the physiology discipline, recognizing why individuals use digital media to discover personal contentedness, social adjustment, and the need for personal sensation seeking, are a few of many areas that can be studied from our culture's digital media usage. Lastly, this could add to research on people promoting social identities.

Research Questions

Therefore, due to digital technology's popularity and gratifications, it endures; expectations are being molded about perceived and actual use of media (Sundar & Limperos, 2010). This reflects the habits of younger generations, specifically college students in the higher education environment. The research questions from this study will help reveal what media college students find most influential when searching for campus related information, their campus social engagement, and the different usage of digital media, if any, between gender and students of different class ranking. More specifically, the questions to be addressed in this study are:

RQ1: In what way do students use traditional media for social engagement?

RQ2: In what way do students use digital media for social engagement?

RQ3: How does gender relate to the information seeking gratification sought by students from social media?

RQ4: What kind of media channels do college students use for obtaining campus related information?

RQ5: What is the relationship between class rank and information seeking gratification

sought from digital media?

Method

Participants

A probability sample of participants was chosen so that the findings could be generalized

from the smaller sample to the larger population. At Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), a

stratified sample of students taken from each class ranking (undergraduate freshman, sophomore,

junior, or senior, and graduate level) was selected. Conducting by this method allowed a

comparison from certain subgroups within the population of study. With a campus population of

approximately 18,000 students (consisting of both undergraduates and graduates), a sample size

of 375 respondents was required to obtain a 95 percent confidence level. Therefore, 75 students

from each subgroup of class ranking was chosen by a systematic random sampling method.

Apparatus and Materials

An online survey using Qualtrics as the survey tool was used for data collection. The

survey was emailed to RIT students so they could participate through a computer or mobile

device. Collecting quantitative data was used for this study because a larger number of responses

was necessary in order to answer questions related to respondents' reported opinions and

behaviors.

Procedure

Prior to data collection, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for human subjects'

research was obtained. In order to investigate what methods college students find the most

influential when searching for campus related information, all potential participants were

directed to an online survey through email using RIT's email listserv. Two days after the initial

email was sent, a reminder email was sent again to capture any respondents who may have forgotten to take the survey the first time. Likert-type scales were used for parts one through four of the survey. These questions asked about the accessibility of digital technologies, frequency of use, and the influential factor behind each medium.

Traditional media was measured using close-ended questions with ordered response choice questions on parts two and three of the survey, which discussed how students heard about campus related information and the influential factor for how students viewed each traditional form of media. Digital media was measured using close-ended with ordered response choice questions on parts one, two, and three of the survey, which discussed frequency of use, type of device used, and the influential factor for how students viewed each digital technology. Campus related information was measured by how students learned this information by using ordered response choice questions on part two of the survey. Questions related to student engagement, measured on part four of the survey, were adopted from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). This questionnaire concluded with the demographic variables of class year, age, and gender in part five.

Variables

Traditional media encompasses print, radio, and television advertisements (Meraz, 2011, p. 176). For the purposes of this study, brochures, flyers/posters, newspaper ads (specifically from RIT's campus newspaper, the *Reporter*), and radio ads (particularly from RIT's campus radio station, WITR 89.7), were considered traditional media.

Digital media, as previously defined as technologies such as iPods, cell phones, computers, and video game systems (Hundley & Shyles, 2010), were applied to this study, with the omission of video game systems. Video systems are being disregarded because advertising in

this medium is primarily done through product placement, which does not relate to this study. The addition of cell phones, desktop, laptop, tablet computers, and e-readers were added.

Colleges have important information they need to distribute to the residents and non-residents of the campus. Campus related information could be vital to a students' careers while attending the university. It helps to ensure a smooth transition as the students' progress through their college career, and also could impact students' engagement on campus. For purposes of this study campus related information pertains to campus life events and activities, dining services, parking information, bookstore information, residential life, and classes and registration.

Student engagement has been a topic of research among schools and universities for a while. It is defined by how students spend their time and what they devote their energy to while attending a university (Hu & McCormick, 2012, p. 739). History has shown the importance of student engagement in encouraging intellectual and academic development (Tison, Bateman, & Culver, 2011), while contributing to the foundation of skills needed to live a satisfying and successful life while in college and after (Evans, Hartman, & Anderson, 2013). Things that positively impact student engagement include support for learning such as writing centers, tutors, and mentoring; constructive emphasis on growth mindsets from professors, faculty/staff, and advisors; perceptions of safety and belonging on campus and in the campus community; student-faculty interaction; and high-impact practices, including research with faculty, internships or field placement, study abroad programs, and community based projects (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2016).

Results

Results from the survey indicated that 98 percent of the respondents own a cell phone as well as 96 percent owning a laptop computer, with Internet access, of which they use daily.

Another 42 percent own a desktop computer and 40 percent own a tablet computer such as an iPad or E-Book reader, which they use, if not daily, then weekly. With these high percentages it is highly plausible that respondents have multiple devices with Internet access, granting these students a limitless supply of connectivity and mobility.

While browsing the Internet either using their cell phone or laptop computer, the respondents specifically are sending or reading emails from their RIT account (91 percent), texting (89 percent), on social media sites including but not limited to Facebook (71 percent), Snapchat (53 percent), and Instagram (48 percent), daily. Every week the respondents report checking student accounts and records for their class information or dining plan, and MyCourses for their assignments, while visiting the rit.edu campus website less than once a month. Over 80 percent never listen WITR 89.7, the campus radio station, or read the *Reporter* online.

Currently the respondents surveyed say they most often find out about campus related information through their RIT student email account (56 percent), or Facebook (31 percent). It is unknown as to whether they find this information out through friends' newsfeeds or official RIT Facebook accounts. Flyers posted around campus are checked frequently at 30 percent with the rit.edu campus website checked somewhat frequently at 26 percent. However, when asked what channels are used when actively searching for campus related information, the search starts to stagger from what they report that they use daily. The RIT student email account is still the channel most likely to be used at 62 percent, but the rit.edu campus website moves up to 26 percent reporting they are most likely to use this method when actively searching for something specific. Facebook, flyers posted around campus, and texting are followed at 32, 23, and 15 percent respectively.

When asked how influential the traditional media method was when searching for campus related information, flyers/posters around campus were the most influential above all categories, but only at 25 percent. This is because it was noted that none of the traditional media methods were seen as influential. On the contrary, when asked what digital media methods were the most influential, the RIT student email, rit.edu website, and Facebook were among the top with the RIT student email as the method used most often. It was observed that Instagram and Snapchat are not checked, yet these are social media sites that they use daily.

In regards to student engagement, during this current school year students have mostly prepared for exams by having discussed material with other classmates, as well as used a campus learning service such as Career Services, Student Activities, Writing Center, or Tutoring Services. Others claimed to have enrolled in the Empower program and attended club meetings. Over half of the survey respondents are involved in at least one or two clubs and/or organizations on campus. This includes Student Government, Sorority or Fraternity, athletics, school paper, teaching assistant, tutor, or any club affiliated with RIT. In addition, over 40 percent of students have, or plan to do, an internship, field experience, student teaching, or clinical placement before they graduate. Thirty percent also have held, or plan to, hold a formal leadership role in Student Government or group on campus. Over 72 percent of students claim to not have a paid job on or off-campus, leaving the majority of their time spent during the week participating in co-curricular activities on campus in addition to their studies.

While students use social media sites aforementioned (Facebook, Snapchat, and Instagram) daily, it appears that they use traditional media methods to actively search out something specific, followed up with digital media methods as a means of confirmation because digital media is what they find to be influential. While email and websites are defined as digital

media, they have been seemingly moving to a level where they are considered old digital media. Therefore, the endorsement, also known as social trust (Joe, Venus, & Jihoon, 2017), given from newer digital media such as social networking sites seems to be the way final decisions are validated. Students find that they trust their universities to provide them with the available resources for them to succeed while attending the institute (provided in the form of traditional media methods), but they use newer digital media as a means of authentication in their decisions of whether or not to participate in certain clubs and organizations, internships, or leadership roles, based on what their peers post to digital media.

Knowing that digital media provides the gratification of membership intention and network homophily (Joe et al., 2017), universities should use hybrid marketing efforts when trying to disburse essential information. Traditional media methods should be employed along with social networking groups, maybe even managed by fellow students, to then provide the social trust needed to move other students forward in engagement practices. For instance, social networking groups created just for specific graduating classes could be formed, which would strengthen network homophily and social trust, and also serve as a resource where students and university departments could share essential information to help authenticate the traditional media methods already employed.

Limitations

It is necessary to note important limitations in this research due to the sampling and data collection methods used for this study. The use of a survey as a method of data collection does produce some limited sampling and respondent availability. That was witnessed by the survey response rate of 175 total completed surveys. A rate of 53 percent additional completed surveys would have been more desirable. Certain populations are less likely to respond to online surveys,

which was seen in the gender seeking responses as 56 percent of the survey takers identified as

female. If students rated email as the most widely used way they find out about information, it

seemingly contradicts the low response rate. Even though the sampling method conducted was as

close to random sampling as possible, the participants who chose to respond might not equate to

the probability sample that was originally selected. It was anticipated to have a stratified sample

within each class ranking, however 36 percent of the survey respondents were identified as an

undergraduate senior resulting in less than a stratified selection. In addition to this, the survey

was administered through the College of Liberals Arts on campus using the email list available

resulting in the survey being sent to all, not just the stratified sample. Along those lines, possible

cooperation problems are likely because although online surveys are more easily disseminated,

Internet users are more often being bombarded with questionnaires and can be quick to delete the

survey invitation. Results from a survey will only reveal what individuals say they do and how

they feel, not produce answers on their true attributes, behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes. The

survey method also does not allow for feedback or additional probing questions of the

respondent. The sample chosen for this study produced results that are only particular to the

participants of the sample.

Further examination about the phrasing of the research questions could have also played

a role into the results of the survey. How is influential defined among the student body? Do

students not see social media as influential? The questions may have been too formally written

that students interpreted them differently than intended.

Directions for Future Research

While the sample method chosen for this study can be generalized from the smaller

sample to the larger population, this study was only conducted at one institution. The study

should be conducted at others as well to better ensure that the results can be generalized from RIT to other college campuses as a whole with better reliability. Furthermore, to better learn and understand behavior among the participants an observation method as the procedure of study would better show what people do, as opposed to what they say they do. Additional studies should also include a younger group of subjects to therefore better prepare marketers and universities for how their upcoming student population base uses media to satisfy their gratifications. Future research could also examine the potential differences between demographic variables such as race, religious affiliation, and income.

Discussion

RQ1: In what way do students use traditional media for social engagement?

When asked how influential the traditional media method was when searching for campus related information, flyers/posters around campus were seen as the most influential option above all categories, but surprisingly only at 25 percent. It was noted that none of the traditional media methods listed were seen as influential and that students only seek out these forms of media "somewhat frequently" at 32 percent. If none of the surveyed traditional media channels are seen as influential, then it can be concluded that these types of methods should not be heavily focused on for information dissemination, especially for immediate engagement purposes. It would be more beneficial to utilize digital media. However, this does not mean that this form of communication should be absent from marketing efforts, but rather the traditional forms of media would be better used for long-term pieces. Since flyers/posters are relatively cheap, simple to create, and easily read if done accurately, then this method might be used to notify students about the date for commencement at the end of the semester, or for a social event that is planned far out in advance.

These results show that despite increased digital activity, effective marketing strategies for colleges and universities should be event based. Meaning, online college fairs and an ad in the campus newspaper are deemed less effective but tabling in the campus union, or hosting in-person events might result in a more effective outreach. Students are more tech savvy than ever before, yet they still resort to traditional approaches of communication depending on the information they are seeking.

RQ2: In what way do students use digital media for social engagement?

The reported high percentages that these students have a multitude of devices with Internet access confirm the mobility, modality, agency, interactivity, and navigability reasons for their uses and gratifications on these devices. While it was noted that they use these devices daily to text, check their RIT email account, and use social media channels, this is not always the method chosen for when they actively search for campus related information. This touches on

RQ4: What kind of media channels do college students use for obtaining campus related information?

Currently, the RIT student email and Facebook are the most widely used ways they find out about social engagement events at 56 and 31 percent respectively. The rit.edu website and texting were seen as the next most widely used approach to learn about social engagements. While they check Instagram and Snapchat daily, they do not use these social media channels to search for information. Nonetheless, marketing efforts should gravitate in that direction since that is where they are daily. By promoting various events, important information related to meal plans, or residential life deadlines, students will be more apt to notice it as they are scrolling through these applications and less likely to notice if it is left up to them to actively search for this information on their own. Since students mostly follow other students, campuses need to

seek out "student ambassadors" to promote this material on their personal social media accounts to perpetuate others' noticing and taking action.

By using student ambassadors this would spike curiosity and interest among students' peers and what they are doing on campus. Popularity and relationship formation might also play a factor in this. If these student ambassadors used a variety of communication methods such as text, video, and pictures via social media, this would tap into the modality affordance that digital media brings, resulting in an enhanced user experience. The more a student's peers are involved with or actively promote something occurring on campus, this connects to a user's agency affordance for using digital media. This is because they see that their online community that they follow rated a particular event highly, which brings trust to the subject matter at hand.

Campus departments using social media or that have created an app, should make sure they tap into the interactivity dimension of information collection and reciprocal communication. This would not be a tool used for playfulness or choice, but rather a means to an end. If possible, demassification would be useful so that a student could create their own personal account or profile to monitor either their meal plan information or academic credits relating to graduation. By doing this, it gives the student control over the selected communication one receives, and it is individualized and tailored to their needs.

RQ3: How does gender relate to the information seeking gratification sought by students from social media?

The survey respondents were primarily female at 56 percent with 40 percent male, two percent transgender, and another two percent preferred not to disclose. Of this mix, over half of these students are involved in one or two clubs or organizations on campus including, but not limited to, student government, sorority or fraternity, sports team, teaching assistant, or club.

These students who are the most engaged are the ones that prefer to find out about campus

related information by checking their RIT student email account and Facebook. This does not

come as a surprise as more females are obtaining their degree and statistically tend to be more

actively involved than their counterparts on campus. Women tend to study aboard more,

volunteer, spend more time preparing for class, earn higher grades, and drop out less than men

(Sanders, 2012).

RQ5: What is the relationship between class rank and information seeking gratification

sought from digital media?

In relation to class rank and information seeking gratification sought from digital media,

36 percent of the respondents were seniors, 19 percent junior, 18 percent sophomore, and 21

percent freshman. Half of this group responded that they "plan to do" an internship or field

placement before they graduate. This further enhances the notion that various departments, such

as Career Services, can become advocates earlier in students' careers to promote the various

options available to them through the suggested digital media outlets.

Summary

Out of all the additional gratifications T. E. Ruggiero added to the uses and gratifications

theory, asynchroneity is the most pursued gratification. This is due to the plethora of media

technologies and social outlets these information seeking students have to choose from. The

convenience that this new technology allows, gives students the flexibility to create their own

agenda for their college career. Related to asynchroneity, the agency affordance gives the user

the role of gate keeper as to what information they choose to read or select. Students can now

elect to learn more about studying abroad later in their career when they are ready, if at all, as

opposed to having to sort through all of this information when they don't necessarily want or

need it. Additionally, since the cell phone meets a person's needs of social connectivity and relationship maintenance within their symbolic community, college campuses can really use this to their advantage by embracing the newest apps into their marketing efforts. This shows that they are in touch with student needs and wants, and have vital information in the appropriate locations where students are hanging out, in a technology sense.

Even though there are more ways to advertise and market than ever before, it appears that new media is helping older media. According to a study by Stephen and Galak (2012) social media helps to drive traditional media coverage. Meaning, if marketers can encourage conversation on social forums, it is more likely that traditional media coverage will occur. Therefore, marketers should employ a hybrid of traditional and digital methods in their communication efforts to get information out to college students (see Appendix B). For example, to help drive cap and gown pick-ups at the campus Bookstore, a video could be made to post on social media with authentic graduating RIT students showing off their excitement with their cap and gown on. Hopefully this video generates dialogue as their friends see and share the video, consequently resulting in students realizing they need to seek out cap and gown information from the Bookstore. The results of this study show that at this point, students will resort to traditional media methods to find out the concrete information they need from a trusted source.

As this paper has shown, the ever-evolving technology and digital media have reshaped the application of the uses and gratifications theory dramatically. History has revealed that as more technologies emerge, only the landscape for marketers and advertisers will yet again change. The findings from this study have shown that college students utilize all marketing and advertising methods, past and present, when searching for essential campus related information, and gravitate more towards digital media for social engagement information.

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Appendix A

Sources Searched

Databases used: Communication & Mass Media Complete, ComAbstracts, Business Source

Elite (EBSCO), Google Scholar, ProQuest, ScienceDirect, SAGE journals, Academic

Search Elite, and ERIC.

Timeframe used: start every search with a wide-open date; typically narrow it down afterwards

to include 1980 – present.

Appendix B

Communicating with Students in Higher Education – Best Practices				
Communication Methodology	Effect/Impact	Best Used For	Example(s)	Frequency of Use by Students
Flyers & Posters	Raise (brand) awareness. Can include a call to action.	Long-term deadlines or events that will eventually require action. Direct them to website or Facebook page that includes more information.	Student housing deposit deadline, date of Commencement, meal plan sign-up deadline.	Fourth most used source after RIT student email, Facebook, and RIT website.
Brochures	Raise (brand) awareness. More informative and detailed than a flyer.	Long-term. Strictly informational. Can be used for long periods of time because information doesn't change often.	Help explain what a particular department provides for students, meal plan information, how to properly fill out student housing application.	Fourth least source used between The Reporter (third least source) and the RIT Mobile App (fifth least).
Campus Newspaper Ad	Raise (brand) awareness. Can include a call to action, i.e. coupon.	Short-term announcements. Can be long-term if repeated. Advertise an upcoming event or promotion. Increase sales in Bookstore, cafés on campus.	Advertise activities such as; Homecoming, Family Weekend, Senior Week. Run promotions at retail locations on campus with coupons	Next to WITR 89.7 radio station, this is the least likely used source to search for information.
Campus Radio Station	Raise (brand) awareness. Induce business. Informational.	Short-term deadlines. Market a social concept of importance to the general public.	Announce a new campus department, new café, important deadlines.	Not a source used to actively search for information.

Student Email	Free advertising. Instant communication. All students are required to have a student email account – reaches the masses. Rich in content - can include attachments, images, and links.	Short and long-term announcements. All campus events, activities, deadline reminders, updates, last minute changes to event(s) information.	When parking permit sales begin and how to purchase, meal plan deadlines, student housing deadlines, all campus activities and events.	Over half of the students reported finding out about campus information by student email. Largest used source.
University Website	Raise (brand) awareness. Induce business. Informational. Can include a call to action. Accessibility and credibility for users.	Long-term detailed information can reside here. Business information – employment application, locations and hours, prices, products, and services.	Promote social media channels, terms of agreement for meal plans, instructions on how to complete a task, details and information for all products and services a customer needs to know.	Third most widely used source when students are actively searching, however it's rated low for how students currently find information.
Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Reddit, YikYak, Snapchat, YouTube)	Raise (brand) awareness by humanizing it. Induce business and generate loyalty. Can include a call to action. Quick information sharing in a fun manner.	Quick announcements and promotions, entertainment to entice followers, offering promotions that only your followers can redeem.	Promote discounts and sales at on-campus stores/cafes, create how-to videos for important calls to action, showcase an event in real-time.	Facebook is among the top three used source when students are actively searching for information.
Texting	Immediate, personal, can be seen everywhere,	Immediate and short information sharing.	Promote current discounts and promotions at campus shops	Texting was not a highly rated source to

	gets read, quick information sharing.		("text 455 for menu"), emergency notifications, last minute important changes.	find campus information.
University Mobile App	Faster alternative to website browsing, quicker connection to what user's want or need.	Immediate and short information sharing. Take what your users' use most from your website and modify it for mobile.	Campus map, menus and hours, load more money onto student account(s), feedback forms.	The mobile app is not widely used.