Discovering How Lower Grade University Students Spend Their Free Time With Media: The Generation Y Scenario

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Abstract This study was conducted to discover how lower grade students of Generation Y at one higher education institution in the East Coast Malaysia spend their free time with media. It is crucial for educators and parents to understand the role of media in young people's lives as media is among the most powerful forces in the young people's lives today. Media is also able to influence the activities that Generation Y students are engaged in during their free time because they are born in the digital age. The respondents for the study were lower grade students from a public university in Malaysia. Self-administered questionnaires were distributed to the respondents and the sample was obtained using a non-probability sampling technique. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The results from this study are hoped to provide educators and parents with valuable information on the impact of media on youths, specifically the lower grade students at higher education institution.

Keywords Free time; Generation Y; lower grade university students; media.

1 Introduction

Time is a resource, according to economists, that can be used productively or squandered (Larson, 2001). The success of an individual does not only depend on the time spent for each activity, but will also depend on how they manage the time more effectively

and efficiently. Higher learning institution students also need to spend their time wisely during their studies in the university. Other than the environment such as building condition, features and age, air temperatures and quality, lighting, acoustical control, school design and classifications, learning climate, teacher behavior and attitudes, and principal leadership, time is also another important factor that will justify students' achievement in university (Uline & Moran, 2007). Many studies have been conducted in developed countries such as in the United States of America with regard to Generation Y's use of time. In 2009, it was found that children and adolescents from Generation Y (ages 18-35) in the USA spent an average of 7 hours and 38 minutes a day with media, namely television (TV), video games, computers, and social networking other than being involved in doing other activities besides sleeping (Rideout et al., 2010). The trend has also increased tremendously from time to time for the past few years because the technology allows nearly 24-hour media access as children and teens go about their daily lives. This scenario has given some impacts on promoting the healthy development of adolescents.

The same scenario also exists in this country. This is supported by a survey conducted by Rashid (2011) that revealed most Form Four students in Johor Bahru, Malaysia would spend their time accessing the social networking sites such as Facebook. Young teenagers were also found to spend 16 hours per week on surfing the net. This has made them become more addicted to the internet every day and has negatively affected their studies because they would have lesser time to do their revision at home (Rashid, 2011). In addition, a study conducted by Hashim et al. (2009) also revealed that lower grade students at the Faculty of Business Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Pahang did admit that they did not know how to manage their time wisely and because of that, they obtained poor results in their examinations at the university. Thus, this study was carried out to discover how the lower grade university students from a selected faculty at one higher education institution in East Coast Malaysia spend their free time with media. The findings from this survey are hoped to provide some solutions especially for the academicians to design appropriate programme or workshop to help the lower grade university students improve their academic performance by using existing media they are familiar with.

2   Literature Review

Generation Y refers to as the generation "Why" because of their tendency to question and not merely accept the status quo (Kehrli & Sopp, 2005 as cited in Halse & Mallinson, 2009). Sometimes Generation Y is also referred as the Net Generation and Gloeckler (2008) termed the group as "millennials" because they were born between 1980 to 2000, a generation who have grown up in a changing culture and an exploding technological revolution. The net generation is larger than the previous generations such as Baby Boomers and Generation X and they are expected to make up 75% of the population by 2012 (Gleason, 2008 as cited in in Worley, 2011). As students become more technologically advanced, the educators must be technologically ready to meet the needs of the students. Hence, it becomes one of the biggest impacts in the area of technology in education as well.

Generation Y use many technological tools for everyday living and communication. They have always had access to cell phones and computers. They are also familiar with electronic devices such as video games, iPods, MP3 players and their favourite source for news is the Internet (Black, 2010 as cited in Worley, 2011). The millennials are so obsessed with technology that by the age of 21, they have spent an average of 10,000 hours playing video games, 2,000 hours watching television, 10,000 hours on the cell phone, and have sent or read 200,000 emails (Barnes, Marateo & Ferris, 2007 as cited in Worley, 2011). Furthermore, millennials have spent hours Facebooking, shopping, surfing, and entertaining themselves (Nilson, 2010 as cited in Worley, 2011). Because of their different characteristics than the previous generations, in the era of information age nowadays, we could find most of the students would have an option during their free time whether to engage in academic activities such reading textbooks, completing assignments, studying, preparing reports, discussing topics related to the courses taken or other non-academic activities such as playing video games, watching favourite movies on television, and chatting on Twitter and Facebook. Definitely, how Generation Y spend their free time would have some impacts on their academic performance. According to Nonis and Hudson (2006), students who spent more time on the academic activities performed better than students who spent less time on academic activities. They also found that the time spent outside classroom on doing academic activities has a significant relationship with the semester grade point average. In addition, Uline and Moran

(2007) in their study revealed that school climate plays a mediating role in the effects of the quality of school facilities on students' achievement. In their study, however, the effects of time spent on the students' academic performance were not discussed.

Nevertheless, Tanner et al. (2009) studied the differences among the business students on how they spent their actual time and how they thought they spent their time. They have come out with different devices of media that may affect students learning time; namely computer, TV and radio. Surprisingly, students spent most of their time using the computer and accessing the Internet. They like to do social networking with friends, do homework and have entertainment such as watching movies and go shopping. Young (2006) observed that entertainment-oriented Internet usage was negatively related to students' achievement. This result indicates that educational contents on the Internet are unlikely to contribute to academic performance of students. Moreover, 90% of students spent their time on entertainment rather than doing homework. Wang et al. (2011) found that 80% of the samples admitted that they posted or responded to the social media while completing homework. Thus, it would likely increase distraction to the students, which can affect the students' performance.

Stollak et al. (2011) added a variable to test the relationship between media based social networking and students' Grade Point Average (GPA). The result shows that they were negatively related. Based on their research, they found that the time spent on several sites such as YouTube, blogs, Twitter, MySpace, or LinkedIn did not differ. Majority of students spent only 15 minutes or less for these sites but more than 30 minutes on Facebook. These major differences show a negative relationship between time spent on the social network media and one's grade. Young (2006) however, concluded in his research that the social network efficiency has positive influence on academic performance. He measured the social network as ego-network efficiency and in degree of centrality. In other words, the higher in-degree centrality and ego-network efficiency are the higher academic grades students are likely to get. Thus, he suggested that the efforts to improve students' academic performance should be shifted towards focusing on promoting relations between classmates from investing in private education. Kalpidou et al. (2010) also shared the same findings but the relationship was different between the two groups; the first year and upper class students. They found that the first-year students had a stronger emotional connection to and

spent more time on social network media such as Facebook, but they did not differ in their academic performance. While, the upper-class students showed a positive relationship. The results suggested that the relationship became positive later in college life when students used media effectively to connect socially with their peers.

3   Methodology

The questionnaire used in this survey was primarily adapted from previous report conducted in the United States of America from 2008 to 2009 (Rideout et al., 2010).   The survey sample consisted of students at one selected faculty in a higher education institution in the East Coast Malaysia. The students obtained Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of below 2.30 based on the April 2012 examination results. The sample was obtained using a non-probability sampling which means that all students starting from Semester 2 onwards from the Diploma in Business Studies (127 students) and Diploma in Banking (66 students) were chosen to become the respondents in this study. However, only 145 respondents answered the questionnaire and only 74 questionnaires were fully completed by the respondents. The questionnaire was completed by the students during the class break from 12.00pm to 1.00pm in the afternoon on the date the survey was distributed. The researchers were also present at that time to provide assistance if needed.

The questionnaire consists of two parts. Part A addresses demographic matters such as gender, age, Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) and name of programme. In Part B, students were asked to answer questions regarding time, which refers to the time spent on using media the day before the survey was distributed. This was done to obtain estimation of the actual use of time rather than projected use or asking the students to attempt to guess their average daily use. According to Rideout et al. (2010), media activities include watching television and movies, playing video games, listening to music and using computers. Thus, the types of media devices the students use during their free time were in Part B of the survey.   The data obtained from the study were analysed using descriptive statistics executed by the Statistical Package for Social Sciences, version 20.0.

4   Findings and Discussions

Table 1: The Frequency of Cell Phone Use in Relation to Activities

Items	Frequency			
	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1. Text messages	40 (54.1%)	24 (32.4%)	8 (10.8%)	2 (2.7%)
2. Listen to music	33 (44.6%)	27 (36.5%)	5 (6.8%)	9 (12.2%)
3. Connect to Facebook, Twitter, MySpace etc	19 (25.7%)	28 (37.8%)	13 (17.6%)	14 (18.9%)
4. Connect to the internet	15 (20.3%)	31 (41.9%)	18 (24.3%)	10 (13.5%)
5. Take pictures	12 (16.2%)	30 (40.5%)	24 (32.4%)	8 (10.8%)
6. Play games	7 (9.5%)	27 (36.5%)	31 (41.9%)	9 (12.2%)
7. Watch video	5 (6.8%)	36 (48.6%)	23 (31.1%)	10 (13.5%)
8. Watch TV shows	3 (4.1%)	26 (35.1%)	23 (31.1%)	22 (29.7%)
9. Take videos	1 (1.4%)	22 (29.7%)	26 (35.1%)	25 (33.8%)

The result shows that most of the students owned a cell phone, laptop, computer, smartphone, iPod or MP3 player, video game player, and discman or walkman. However, none of them owned a PDA. It indicates that each of the students owned at least one of the personal media devices. As can be seen in Table 1, most of the students often used their cell phone to text messages with the percentage of 54.1% (40 students). Next, 33 (44.6%) students often listened to music on their cell phone and followed by 19 (25.7%) students often used their cell phone to get connected to Facebook, Twitter, MySpace and other social networking sites. Out of 74 students, 15 (20.3%) often got connected to the Internet via their cell phone and 12 (16.2%) students often took pictures with their cell phone. 7 (9.5%) students claimed that they often used their cell phone to play games, 5 (6.8%) students watched videos and 3 (4.1%) students watched TV shows via their cell phone.   Nevertheless, the majority of the students did not use their cell phone to take videos, as there was only 1 (1.4%) student, who reported that he/she often used his/her cell phone to take videos.

We can say that students prefer to use their cell phone to send/receive text messages, listen to music and use the internet for entertainment and communicating with friends and family.

Since the majority of the students claimed that they often used their cell phone to send/receive text messages, Table 2 shows that 11 students spent their free time sending more than 101 text messages to their friends and family but most of the students sent 51 to 100 text messages in one day. Nevertheless, 7 students reported that they did not send any text message a day before the survey was conducted. Table 3 also indicates that 23 students took about 5 to less than 30 minutes on texting via their cell phone, 11 students spent 30 minutes to 1 hour and 22 students spent 1 to 3 hours. Surprisingly, 7 students reported that they spent between 3 to 5 hours on texting and 4 students spent more than 5 hours texting on their cell phone in one day. This finding is supported by Miller (2009), who investigated the impact of increased technology use on the free-time choices of fifth and seventh grade students in a Southern School District. The researcher reported that a cell phone texting took a substantially larger portion of students' free-time than talking on a cell phone. Lenhart et al. (2005) also indicated that texting among youths was on the rise. In addition, Reid and Reid (2007) stated that a short-messaging system (SMS) is expected to dominate mobile messaging in both traffic and volume in the last quarter of the present decade.

Table 2: The Frequency of Using Cell Phone On Messaging

The text messages via cell phone		The time spent texting on a cell phone	
More than 101	11	None	7
51-100	20	5 min-less than 30 min	23
26-50	12	30 min-1 hour	11
11-25	15	1-3 hours	22
1-10	9	3-5 hours	7
None	7	More than 5 hours	4

Next, we investigated the amount of time students spent to watch television and movie. Table 3 shows that out of 74 students, 14 (18.9%) students watched television between 5 minutes and less than 30 minutes, 3 (4.1%) students watched television between 30 minutes to 1 hour and 3 (4.1%) students watched television for 1 hour to 3 hours. It was also found that 54 (73%) students did not spend their time watching television from 12.00 pm to 6.00 pm, while 15 (20.3%) students spent between 5 minutes to less than 30 minutes, 2 (2.7%)

students spent between 30 minutes to 1 hour, 2 (2.7%) students spent 1 hour to 3 hours, and 1 (1.4%) student spent more than 3 hours watching television. However, it was found that 54 (73%) students did not spend their time watching television from 6.00 pm to 12.00 midnight. We can say that probably our students did not spend too much time watching television because they do not have a TV set at their hostel or rental house. The students were also asked to rate how often they used the computer, read, played video games,sent text messages or listened to music at the same time while watching television. In view of this aspect, the results indicate that 11(14.9%) students often spent most of the time using computer, reading, playing video games, texting or listening to music at the same time. This is followed by 30 (40.5%) another 23 (31.1%) who often spent some of the time doing those activities at the same time, while only 10 (13.5%) students claimed that they never used computer, read, played video games,sent text messages and listened to the music while watching TV.

Table 3: The Frequency of Time Spent on Watching TV on a TV set

Items	Frequency				
	None	5 min-less than 30 min	30 min-1 hour	1-3 hour	More than 3 hours
Between 12 noon to 6 pm	54 (73%)	14 (18.9%)	3 (4.1%)	3 (4.1%)	0
Between 6pm to midnight	54 (73%)	15 (20.3%)	2 (2.7%)	2 (2.7%)	1 (1.4%)

As can be seen in Figure 1, 41 (55.4%) students did not watch any movie in the movie theater the day before the survey was conducted. However, 23 (31.1%) students did watch one movie, 6 (8.1%) students watched two movies, and surprisingly 4 (5.4%) students did spend their time watching three or more movies at the movie theater.
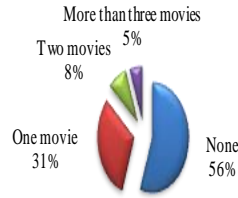
Figure 1: Number of Movies Watched at a Movie Theater

With regard to video games, as shown in Table 4, the study found that the number of students who played a video game hooked up to a television set between 5 minutes to 30 minutes was 10 (13.5%) students, 4 (5.4%) students for 30 minutes to 1 hour, and 3 (4.1%) students for more than 3 hours. 57 (77%) students did not play a video game via a television set. Meanwhile, the number of students who played a video game on the cell phone for at least 5 minutes to 30 minutes was 29 (39.2%), 7 (9.5%) students for 30 minutes to 1 hour, 3 (4.1%) students for 1 to 3 hours and only 2 (2.7%) students spent more than 3 hours playing a video game on the cell phone. The remaining 33 (44.6%) students did not play a video game on the cell phone. It means that our students prefer to play video games on their cell phone rather than using a video game player that was hooked up to a TV. Probably, it is easier for them to move around and spend their free time as they wish.

Table 4: The Frequency of Time Spent on Playing Video Games

Items	Frequency			
	None	5 min-less than 30 min	30 min-1 hour	More than 3 hours
A video game player hooked up to TV	54 (73%)	10 (13.5%)	4 (5.4%)	3 (4.1%)
A cell phone	33 (44.6%)	29 (39.2%)	7 (9.5%)	3 (4.1%)

As shown in Figure 2, the number of students who used the computer, watched television, read,sent text messages and listened to music when playing video games was 3 (4.1%) students, followed by 29 (39.7%) students who spent some of the time doing other activities at the same time while playing video games, another 25

(34.2%) students spent a little time and 16 (21.9%) students never used computer, watched television, read,sent text messages and listened to music when playing video games.
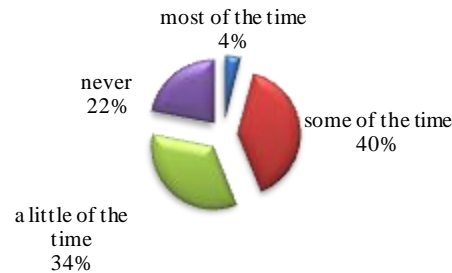

Figure 2: Activities Done at the Same Time while Playing Video Games: use Computer, Watch TV, Read, Texting or Listen to Music

Regarding the time spent on listening to the music and media device, Table 5 shows that 31(41.9%) students would at least spend between 5 and less than 30 minutes a day listening to music from the cell phone, followed by listening to music from the computer (22 students), listening to music from the radio (16 students), listening to music from CD (7 students), and listening to music from an iPod or an MP3 player (5 students).

As for other activities done while listening to music, it was found that 11 (14.9%) students used computer, watched television, read, sent text messages, and played video games most of the time when they listened to music. A total of 35 (47.3%) students used computer, watched television, read, sent text messages, and played video games some of the time while listening to music, 19 (25.7%) students spent a little time doing other activities while listening to music, and 9 (12.2%) students never used computer, watched television, read, sent text messages, and played video games at the same time when listening to music. The finding is presented in Figure 3.

Table 5: The Frequency of Time Spent on Listening to Music on
Each Media Device

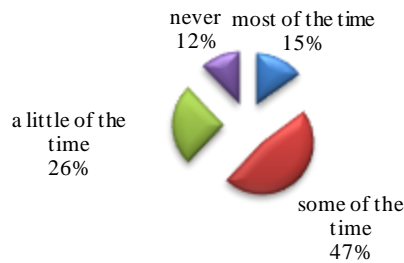| Items	Frequency				
	None	5 min-less than 30 min	30 min-1 hour	1-3 hour	More than 3 hours
Radio	44 (60.3%)	16 (21.9%)	6 (8.2%)	3 (4.1%)	3 (4.1%)
CD	65 (89%)	7 (9.6%)	1 (1.4%)	0	0
Cell phone	20 (27%)	31 (41.9%)	17 (23%)	6 (8.1%)	0
Ipod or other MP3 player	61 (82.4%)	5 (6.8%)	6 (8.1%)	2 (2.7%)	0
Computer	30 (40.5%)	22 (29.7%)	14 (18.9%)	7 (9.5%)	1 (1.4%)

Figure 3: Activities Done at the Same Time when Listening to Music:
use Computer, Watch Television, Read, Text Messages, Play Video
Games

As for the time spent on using computer for specific activities, Table 6 shows that 30 (40.5%) students would at least spent between 5 and less than 30 minutes a day on the computer to access Facebook, followed by surfing the website to upload and to watch video (22 students), doing graphic activities such as photo editing and web designing (21 students), sending instant messages (20 students), playing games (16 students), doing school work (16

students), e-mailing (15 students) and lastly reading online magazines and newspapers (13 students).

Table 6: The Frequency of Time Spent on Using Computer for Certain Activities

Items	Frequency				
	None	5 min-less than 30 min	30 min-1 hour	1-3 hour	More than 3 hours
Doing the school work	28 (37.8%)	16 (21.6%)	20 (27%)	6 (8.1%)	4 (5.4%)
Playing games	45 (62.7%)	16 (21.6%)	8 (10.8%)	2 (2.7%)	3 (4.1%)
Instant messaging	45 (60.8%)	20 (27%)	6 (8.1%)	3 (4.1%)	0
Emailing	56 (75.7%)	15 (20.3%)	2 (2.7%)	1 (1.4%)	0
Reading magazines and newspaper online	55 (74.3%)	13 (17.6%)	5 (6.8%)	1 (1.4%)	0
Doing graphic (photo editing, web design)	44 (59.5%)	21 (28.4%)	7 (9.5%)	2 (2.7%)	0
Facebook	22 (29.7%)	30 (40.5%)	15 (20.3%)	3 (4.1%)	4 (5.4%)
Website, upload, and watching video	38 (51.4%)	22 (29.7%)	8 (10.8%)	3 (4.1%)	3 (4.1%)

Figure 4 summarises the activities done at the same time while using a computer. It was found that the number of students who spent most of the time watching television, reading, sending text messages, listening to the music or playing video games while using a computer was 8 (9.5%), followed by 43 (58.1%) students who spent some of the time doing other activities while using a computer, 16 (21.6%) students spent a little time doing other activities while using a computer and 7 (9.5%) students never watched television, read,

listened to music, sent text messages or played video games while using a computer.
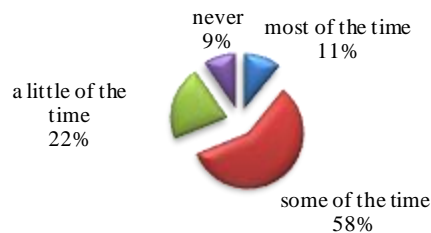

Figure 4: Activities Done at the Same Time While Using a Computer

5   Conclusions and Recommendations

The researchers conclude that 92.2% of the lower grade university students involved in the study spent their free time using the computer for non-academic purposes instead of academic activities such as doing assignments. Approximately 83.63% of the lower grade students spent their free time in a day using their cell phones, and 55.64% of the students listened to music on different devices and 73% of the students did not spend their free time watching television on a TV set. This study also shows that the lower grade university students generally spend more of their free time on non-academic activities, and probably this situation has contributed to the students' poor academic results in their final examination every semester.

The results of this study present some challenges to educators at the particular faculty to help the lower grade students. Since there is a special programme known as "Kudup Akan Berkembang"; a mentoring programme runs by a PDCA (*Plan, Do, Check, Action*) group under the faculty to help low achievers to improve their grades, the researchers who are also a part of the mentoring programme should consider designing a workshop that integrates interactive media in order to grasp the students' attention and interest. The students, who are also known as Generation Y, are more attracted to use media devices most of their time in their everyday lives. According to Ahmad Zaini et al. (2010) in their survey on the use of video as a teaching tool in a Malaysian Economy class, the students agreed that the learning activities

became more interesting and enjoyable when media is used during the lessons. Perhaps the use of internet for online activities, video and music, to name a few, should be included in the module in order to increase the lower grade students' participation in any workshop conducted by the faculty in the future. The students also prefer to use media devices such as cell phones and social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and MySpace to communicate with their friends, family and even lecturers instead of meeting them face-to-face.

Furthermore, instructors or lecturers could also be more creative in delivering their lessons to Generation Y students through the usage of technological devices because the students would spend most of the time doing non-academic activities. Perhaps using Facebook, Twitter or other social communication tools when dealing and giving instructions to students with regard to the lessons taught or any matter in the classroom would encourage students to participate in the lessons and class discussions. Sometimes, students pay less attention in the classroom (Fried, 2008), but they would behave oppositely when they are out of the classroom especially when using media gadgets or other technological devices (Tanner et al., 2009). Lecturers are urged to open a Facebook or Twitter account in order to communicate well with Generation Y students. This could also help them to understand their students better. Any information regarding tests, quizzes, assignments, group projects and others could be informed via the technological social communication media, rather than delivering and discussing the subject matter in the classroom. It is hoped that the number of lower grade students could be reduced with the aid of media. They should also be guided continuously and monitored by the educators about their studies with the usage of technological devices during their free time. The finding above found that students spent their free time on Facebook and other social networking sites, and this situation would have a relationship to the students' performance and academic achievement and this finding is supported by Young (2006), Wang et al. (2011) and Stollak et al. (2011).

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