

The Level of Satisfaction when using Social Media to Express Opinion

Erynnadiyah Nuraisyah Asharudin & Muhammad Hafiez Zulhakim Zailani
Universiti Teknologi MARA Alor Gajah, Melaka

***Erynnadiyah Nuraisyah Asharudin**

Faculty of Communication and Media Studies
University Teknologi MARA Cawangan Melaka
email: eryn325@gmail.com

Muhammad Hafiez Zulhakim Zailani

Faculty of Communication and Media Studies
University Teknologi MARA Cawangan Melaka
email: 2022463892@student.uitm.edu.my

ABSTRACT

In this era, social media complements many aspects of our lives. It provides a variety of services to the public, including the ability to share thoughts and opinions on social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. This paper focuses on studying Malaysians' use of social media to express their opinions. This study applied the Users and Gratifications theory (UGT) as theories that explain how humans utilize or seek out particular media to satisfy their needs. This survey included 400 social media users, and the sample was acquired using Google Forms. The findings of this study depicted that people find satisfaction after voicing out their opinions on social media (M=3.03).

Keywords: social media, express, opinions, thoughts, Users and Gratifications theory

INTRODUCTION

Social media has evolved into one of the essential tools in people's lives. In another sense, social media is significant because people are becoming reliant on it as it is now widely used as a platform for various things. Social media has rapidly gained popularity and has a huge number of users worldwide as it allows people to share their thoughts, ideas, and information without having to confront one another. Moreover, the existence of social media has opened up the space and opportunity for the public to express opinions, disseminate information, and process issues without censorship of media as gatekeepers compared to traditional mass media which include books, newspapers, and magazines. This situation gives a new boost in the vicinity of public opinion through social media (Mustaffa et al., 2018). Social media is regarded as the most important means of communication because it has increasingly become ubiquitous among people and is used as an open discussion platform. This can be proved by the existence of discussion platforms such as Facebook, Reddit, and Quora. According to Lockyer & Patterson (2008), these sites help users connect with people and share information with them. Also, it has been proven practical as it helps people to be knowledgeable because people tend to question things and some people love to answer or solve problems, whether it is for academic purposes or real-life experiences. This will then contribute to the development of problem-solving skills while strengthening social networking among people. When this occurs, it leads to social and psychological satisfaction which can be associated with a theory known as the "Uses and Gratification Theory".

Because of its roots in the communications literature, the uses and gratifications theory is applicable to social media. As stated by Lariscy et al. (2011), the primary concept of uses and gratifications theory is that individuals would seek out media that meets their wants and leads to ultimate gratifications among competitors. This is consistent with the statement above, in which social media is being effectively and efficiently used as a platform of discussion as people choose to express their thoughts and opinions there. This can be depicted by the survey conducted by Statista Research Department (2016), on the proportion of people in the United Kingdom who voiced their own thoughts on the internet and online social media. In this survey, it was discovered that 20% of responding internet users, ranging from age 15-45, frequently shared their opinions on the internet as they find it effective when doing so.

In the present circumstances, people now opt to express themselves in social media with the advent of virtual spaces such as Twitter, Tiktok, and Facebook. These platforms are widely used among people such as university students, adolescents, and also adults. It offers lots of opportunities for them to comment or express their opinions regarding specific areas of interest. As an example, recently, the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim issued a statement pertaining to the meeting of the National Account Council on Cost of Living (NACCOL). The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the redistribution of the bulk subsidies that are beneficial to the super-rich and conglomerates towards supporting the B40, M40, and small traders who are particularly affected and in need. In this case, people tend to respond to the issue by giving their personal opinions and recommendations on how to improve the subsidies. Some people also disagree with the statement made as they believe that it is unfair to distribute the subsidies to the M40. It is not wrong or right in doing so as people's opinions would truly differentiate one from the other.

Therefore, the users and gratification theory is used as a guide to identifying the level of satisfaction that people gain when expressing their opinions on social media. Debates between opinions are a good thing as people would be interested in how to deal with the issue, and together, the discussion would develop even more to suggest what would be the best solution or conclusion by the end of the discussion. Plus, there might be several thoughts of what we might not know regarding the issue, and thus we can gain something new and learn contemporary knowledge. This matter is surely beneficial for all people regardless of their age or gender they are. Thus, this justifies that people should not be ashamed of their personal opinions to be sound in social media, as virtual platform space like nowadays offers a lot of people space to communicate with other people, no matter how far their distance is. Public opinions do matter to the world as people's rights and advocacy towards certain matters would be heard by the government or the people who need to listen or see the voice of the public.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Previously, information was often discussed asynchronously as people only utilized traditional mass media such as newspapers, books, and magazines as a platform for discussion or to express their opinions. This limits the public's ability to communicate or voice out their thoughts because traditional mass media can only reach a limited audience and allow only one-way communication. At present times, technology has crept into every corner of our life. It provides a better opportunity for the public to express themselves as technology has invented the existence of social media platforms including Twitter, Facebook, and Tiktok. As a result of the rapid innovation and implementation of new media platforms, particularly social media, Cruzei et. al (2019), intra-organizational communication has become nearly instantaneous.

Thus, technological innovation is proven to serve more effective conflict resolution and eliminate spatial disparities among the people (Nuru M.D., 2020). Anyhow, the advent of technology poses some challenges to the public, including ways to identify people's satisfaction level when expressing their opinions on social media platforms. The issue that can be associated with this problem is when the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC), reminds Malaysians to maintain decency, tolerance, and etiquette when giving views and making comments on social media. It was also mentioned that posting inaccurate, offensive, or threatening content was a violation of Section 233 of the Communications and Multimedia Act (AKM) of 1998. Those convicted can be fined a maximum of RM50,000 or jailed for one year or both. Moreover, it is essential to examine whether people find it effective to vent about a particular topic on social media, despite being anonymously or not, as certain people express their sentiments on the internet as a coping mechanism, or because they have no one to confide in their concerns to.

The other problem that is being discussed is the acceptance level of people on social media pertaining to debatable issues that might create a conflict. This matter involves public opinion which may touch sensitive issues. Some people will definitely not be comfortable with it but somehow, it is an opinion on a wide platform that can be discussed together. Also, raising issues should require opinions from different people's perspectives as public opinion does matter. On the other hand, it might help some people to gain knowledge but also some sort of stuff should be carefully expressed as different people may have different opinions. Plus, not all opinions and information shared are fully credible. These days, less attention has been paid

to the truth of any news or opinions that are shared on social media. There is no denying that social media is a great medium for communication, but it also allows rumors that people spread to thrive. Thus, misleading information on the internet has the potential to mislead a large number of netizens. Therefore, this study will identify the acceptance level of people towards the information or public opinions accessible online.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the level of satisfaction of people when expressing opinions on social media platforms?
2. What is the acceptance level of people on social media regarding debatable issues that might create a conflict regarding those issues?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the level of satisfaction of people when expressing opinions on social media platforms
2. To determine the acceptance level on social media in regard to debatable issues that exist and might create a conflict about those issues

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In conducting or coordinating the research, quantitative research is the primary tool used in obstructing this study. The method consists of online surveys, which were given out through various social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to the public via links specifically created to gather information. Since this study is necessary and focuses on public opinion in order to collect the findings and consequences of the topic addressed, using all of these platforms, especially the public, makes it easier for the researcher to reach and gather respondents (Ridzuan, Ridzuan, and Ridzuan, 2018).

Sampling Technique

In this study, a non-probability sampling technique called "purposive sampling" was employed as the respondents for this study are social media users aged 18 and above. The study employed nonprobability sampling, a practical sample approach. According to McCombes (2021), not everyone has an equal chance of being selected for inclusion in a non-probability sample since selection criteria are non-random. Participants in the poll are randomly selected from the general population and come from a variety of professions, including those in the public and private sectors, self-employment, education, full-time homemakers, retirees, and the jobless (Ridzuan, Ridzuan, and Ridzuan, 2018). According to the Raosoft sample size calculator, the recommended sample size for a 95% confidence level is 377. However, 400 respondents were successfully gathered.

Research Measurement

The survey's 28 items are all related to demographic information. The questionnaire is related to the study's research objectives. The questions include yes-no, MCQs, matrix questions, and yes-or-no questions as well as rating scales from 1 to 4 (strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), agree (3), and strongly agree (4)). Respondents find it simple to comprehend and reply to the questions since they are so real and trustworthy. It was also rationally designed to avoid misunderstandings during the question-and-answer session.

Data Analysis

The data were examined using SPSS version 23 software, which stands for Statistical Package of Social Science. Both designing the survey and uploading the results are steps in the data analysis process. The study's goals, which include identifying the level of satisfaction of people when expressing opinions on social media platforms and determining the acceptance level on social media in regard to debatable issues that exist and might create a conflict, are appropriately served by the survey's questions. To determine the validity of the research, a questionnaire is given to the first 50 respondents. The poll will be closed once 400 responses have been collected, and SPSS will be used to examine and research the data. The researchers calculated the frequency, percentage, and mean using descriptive statistics.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The demographic profile of 400 respondents is shown in Table 1 below. The majority of the respondents are female (54.0%), aged between 18-21 years old (46.3%), and Malay (71.3%). Most of them are degree holders (41.0%), still studying (61.4%), and have not married (77.8%). They stay in the central region (41.5%), and the social media platform they frequently use is Instagram (70.0%).

Table 1: Descriptive analysis of the demographic profile of social media users

Characteristics	Category	Frequency, <u>n</u>	Percentage, <u>%</u>
Sex	Female	216	54.0
	Male	184	46.0
Age	18-21	185	46.3
	22-24	99	24.7
	25-30	54	13.5
	31 and above	62	15.5
Ethnicity	Malay	285	71.3
	Chinese	60	15.0

	Indian	39	9.8
	Iban	3	0.7
	Rungus	3	0.7
	Bidayuh	2	0.5
	Kadazan	1	0.2
	Bumiputera Sabah	2	0.5
	Others	5	1.3
Level of Education	SPM	84	21
	Diploma	128	32
	Bachelor's Degree	164	41
	Master's Degree	20	5
	PhD	4	1
Occupation	Student	245	61.3
	Employed	97	24.2
	Unemployed	10	2.5
	Housewife	19	4.7
	Self-Employed	25	6.3
	Retirees	2	0.5
	Nurse	1	0.2
	Freelance translator	1	0.2
Marital Status	Single	311	77.8
	Married	81	20.3
	Widowed	8	2
Region	Northern Region	43	10.8
	Southern Region	120	30
	Central Region	165	41.3
	East Coast Region	47	11.8
	Borneo Region	25	6.3
Which Social Media Platform do you frequently use?	Facebook	144	36
	Twitter	216	54
	Instagram	280	70
	Tiktok	260	65
	Snapchat	65	16.3
	Miscellaneous apps	37	9.7
Do you believe that giving out opinions on social media is legitimate?	Yes	359	89.8
	No	41	10.3

Do you think that opinions on social media varied and balanced?	Yes	230	57.5
	No	170	42.5

Do you like to give out comments on social media to voice your opinions?	Yes	290	72.5
	No	110	27.5

Descriptive statistics of each item and variable are shown in Table 2 below. On average, respondents agreed that they find satisfaction after expressing their opinion on social media platforms ($M=3.03$).

Specifically, onto each variable item, the most important item in this study is that people are satisfied when their opinions are shared on social media and will be responded well by the netizens ($M=3.30$). There are five (5) key reasons why individuals feel obliged to share material online, whether it be every little thing or only the highlights of their lives, (Berger and Milkman [25]), There are because of cause-related, personal connection to the content, to feel more involved in the world, to define who they are, and to inform and entertain. Most people share because they think what they are sharing is significant. It is believed that people would value the shared material, which will lead to an increase in shares, likes, and follows.

Based on the second-rated mean in this study is that most of the people these days prefer using text-based social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook to share their opinions. ($M=3.26$). Statistics proved, (Facebook Inc., 2016), state that Facebook has more than a billion active daily users and more than 1.65 billion active monthly users, with the majority of users accessing it through mobile devices. The regular and ritualized character of Facebook use is shown by the fact that almost three-quarters of Internet users report having a Facebook account and that 7 in 10 users report using the site daily (Duggan, 2015b). Although the majority of young people (18-29) report using Facebook (87%), there was a 5% decrease in usage within this age group from 2013 to 2015, but there was no discernible change among Internet adult users (Duggan, 2015a; Duggan, Ellison, Lampe, Lenhart, & Madden, 2015). As for Twitter, it has been classified as a microblogging service, where users engage in "real-time" with their followers via 140-character tweets plus the users are able to communicate via mentions, replies, and hashtags (Stec, 2015). In 2013, one-third of online young people between the ages of 18 and 29 reported using Twitter, rising to 37% in 2014 and 32% in 2015 (Duggan, 2015a; Duggan et al., 2015). Data on the number of Twitter users has been criticized for its authenticity in recent years since Twitter overestimates the number of users by adding accounts that have not been active for lengthy periods of time. (Bennett, 2011). Nonetheless, Twitter recently announced that it had 320 million active users and 1 billion unique monthly visitors to sites via embedded tweets (Twitter, 2016).

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of each item and variable

Section	Variable	Mean
B	Satisfaction	3.03
B5	I feel satisfied when my opinions that are shared on social media are responded to by the netizens.	3.30
B6	I enjoy using text-based social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook to share my opinions	3.26
B1	I find satisfaction after expressing my opinions on social media.	3.11
B7	I enjoy using image-based social media platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat to share my opinions	3.08
B2	I believe that my voice in a particular matter or issue is being heard on social media.	3.00
B3	I believe that I can be my true self when expressing my thoughts on social media.	2.92
B4	I believe that freedom of expression in social media should be absolute.	2.55

Descriptive statistics of each item and variable are shown in Table 3 below. On average, the acceptance level on social media in regard to debatable issues that exist and might create a conflict about those issues has been agreed by respondents well ($M=2.78$).

The best way to determine the acceptance level on social media in regard to debatable issues that exist is that they believe that their opinion does matter while debating an issue that needs to be discussed ($M=3.16$). Due to the ability for people to express their experiences online, researchers have begun to look at the function of online discussion as a kind of political talk (Shah et al., 2007), as the internet has grown. (Scheufele et al., 2004). Through a variety of interactive communication tools, it enables users to participate in an endless number of political conversations (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). People who are aware of the importance of the political problem are constantly active in the conversation and they typically share their opinions about the subject, which is frequently promoted by cross-ideological debate (Wojcieszak & Mutz, 2009).

Based on the second-rated mean in this study is that people conscientiously share their opinions on social media to avoid any disagreements ($M=3.14$). The personality of the users must be taken into account in addition to the characteristics of the social network in order to understand how messages are conveyed there. To be able to produce assertions that may be repeated, it makes sense to represent the users and their personalities as realistically as feasible. Past research has previously shown that the personality of users of online social networks is connected to the features of the particular network (Bachrach et al., 2012; Kosinski et al., 2013; Dong et al., 2014). There are several models that attempt to capture a person's personality. The Big Five personality trait model is a given when attempting to explain a person's personality. Different personalities can be described using a well-established theory (Costa and McCrae, 1992). The model bases its description of personality on five traits; openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, neuroticism, and agreeableness. Openness means a person whom has a strong sense of creativity and intellectual curiosity. Being conscientious is often thought to imply being organized and cautious. Strong extraversion is a personality attribute that makes a person friendly and more likely to seek out simulation. Emotional instability is referred to as the personality attribute neuroticism and includes unfavorable feelings like anxiety and despair. A person with a strong sense of agreeableness is extremely cooperative and shows a lot of empathy for other people (Power and Pluess, 2015).

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of each item and variable

<u>Section</u>	<u>Variable</u>	<u>Mean</u>
C	Acceptance	2.78
C7	I believe that my opinion does matter while debating an issue that needs to be discussed.	3.16
C8	I conscientiously share my opinions on social media to avoid any disagreements.	3.14
C3	I will back people's opinions as a netizen by providing support and evidence of the opinion.	3.07
C6	I will respond to any occurring issues regarding religion in Malaysia, even if some people might issue a sensitive opinion.	3.03

C4	I will respond to any occurring issues regarding race matters in Malaysia, even if some people might issue a sensitive opinion.	2.97
C5	I will respond to any occurring issues regarding cultural matters in Malaysia, even if some people might issue a sensitive opinion.	2.97
C1	I love to give questions that might create conflict on any social media platform.	2.29
C2	I tend to accept any opinions that are being shared on social media without checking their authenticity.	1.60

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings gathered, it can be summarised that The Level of Satisfaction when using Social Media to Express Opinion is proven well with the fact of research objective of identifying the level of satisfaction of people when expressing opinions on social media platforms (M=3.03). Also, to determine the acceptance level on social media in regard to debatable issues that exist and might create a conflict about those issues, average respondents have been recorded too (M=2.78).

Social media is proven to be a great tool for communication. The findings have revealed that people gain satisfaction after expressing themselves on social media. The opinions shared on social media can be trusted as people tend to check the authenticity and credibility of the information they find on social media. However, people wish that freedom of expression on social media is absolute. Freedom of expression is undoubtedly fundamental to society as it leads to democracy. However, certain restrictions should be applied to freedom of expression to prevent people from abusing the right given, such as delivering a speech that encourages violence or discrimination of gender, race, ethnicity, or physical appearance.

People's perceptions of social media as a tool or platform for promoting change or raising awareness are also correlated with their opinions of democracy. People who also think they have a say in politics are especially likely to believe that social media is useful for influencing public policy and bringing concerns to the notice of elected officials or the general public. This is because social media can be an influencing method for netizens around the globe. The usage of social media is not only limited to certain ages, but the age group of it is typically wide of its users due to the borderless world.

Social media platforms should be wisely utilized to communicate thoughts and perceptions and as a medium that provides easy access to information. Thus, preliminary steps should be taken to prevent the public from exploiting social media platforms. The government plays a vital role in preventing social media abuse by implementing legislation governing social media rules, and informing the public that they are prohibited from using social media for illegal purposes. The public should also take prompt action if they detect any persons attempting to incite violence, such as abusing and harassing others on any social media sites.

As social media ourselves, we should also beware when expressing opinions on social media to avoid any conflict or outrage. One of the steps that can be taken is to set our account preferences to private when commenting on something pertaining to other parties to avoid defamation and oversharing as some people would have opinions that are contrary to ours. Therefore, knowing how to successfully express thoughts on social media is essential for gaining satisfaction and avoiding repercussions.

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